

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS
ON THE STAGE

MRS. CHARLES CALVERT

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THE STAGE

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Adelaide Helen Calvert. 1907.

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS ON THE STAGE

BY
MRS. CHARLES CALVERT

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*I desire to express my indebtedness to Mr. Harold Simpson,
who has kindly assisted me in the editing of this book.*

SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS ON THE STAGE

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS ON THE STAGE

“At first the Infant.”

SHAKESPEARE.

My father, James Biddles, when a lad of eighteen had married my mother, a girl also eighteen, and I was their third child, the two elder ones having died in their infancy. My father was the son of a Leicestershire farmer, the eldest of seven, but he disliked the agricultural life and tried various other occupations, drifting at last to the stage, which at that time meant hard work, and to many people's minds, also included perdition.

My first recollection of him was that he was principal comedian in the employ of a Mr. Harvey, who was manager of a circuit. The provincial theatres were at that time unable to keep open all the year round, and averaged a season of only two or three months in the year. A manager usually had several theatres, so that he could employ his company the whole year round.

Mr. Harvey was the manager of the Theatres

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Royal, Plymouth, Weymouth, Exeter, Jersey and Guernsey. The work was hard, because in all theatres the bill was changed every night—even Drury Lane and Covent Garden altered their programmes each evening. An actress had to find all her own costumes, and as the sewing-machine was not then invented, the alteration and retrimming of dresses was a tedious and daily task. Added to this the salaries were miserably small, and as the puritanical element, which regarded stage plays as an abomination and the pit of a theatre as analagous to the one with no foundation, was more rife than it is to-day, it can be easily understood that the patrician young ladies and gentlemen of the time were not anxious to join the theatrical ranks, and that therefore the supply scarcely equalled the demand.

This will account for the fact that a young man and his wife, utterly ignorant of even the bare rudiments of the stage, had succeeded in obtaining an engagement in so important a circuit. The life after all had its compensations. The employment was continuous, and there were only five journeys in the year, the plays represented in one town were repeated in the others, with possibly two or three additional ones, the lodgings were returned to again and again, until the landladies were like old friends (and second mothers to us children);



MRS. CALVERT'S GRANDMOTHER.

(From an old portrait)

My Mother's Letter

and the scanty wardrobe of the actress was often supplemented by gifts from the fashionable ladies, who would stop in their carriages at the stage-door and leave a parcel with their compliments. The following letter of my mother's written to my grandmother, and given to me by one of my aunts who had treasured it for many years, touches upon this. It will be noted that no diminutives are used for the children's names, it was not the vogue, at least not amongst the middle classes—in fact, a child was frequently called by the two Christian names which it invariably possessed, and it was no unusual thing to hear a mother address her children as “William Frederick” or “Amelia Charlotte.” The “Adelaide” of the letter is, of course, myself.

Exeter.

January, 1842.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I thought I would leave it alone till I got here, writing to you; we had a most terrific voyage, not dangerous but very unpleasant. A frightful sea washed us all on to the deck of the vessel, so we were obligated to go into the cabin. We were about ten hours in our passage, and were all dreadfully sick. Except the Baby, dear little soul, she never cried but once, and then Mr. Harvey had the kindness to have her all the time. We have got some

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great attractions in the company, nearly a new one. Next week we have Mr. Betty the celebrated Tragedian, and Adelaide will have to play the Duke of York, and a Page in *Romeo and Juliet*, and she's delighted. She gets a nice girl but is rather rude. She is seven years of age to-morrow, and she is invited to a young Ladies' Ball on Tuesday evening, and is so disappointed, as she plays in both Pieces, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Grandfather Whitehead*.¹ By the bye, she plays that part uncommonly well. Tell her grandfather that when she plays it, she cries in it, and she says it is because she thinks of him at the time. It is a very pretty piece and some parts of it are very affecting, and, poor little thing, she has her eyes brimful of tears. She is learning the piano. Miss Hamilton is staying in the same house and has a piano, and is kind enough to bestow great pains upon her, she says she is so apt, she never saw one more so in her life. My other dear children are all well, thank God! Clara Susanna's eyes are as blue as ever, and she is getting stout. With the exception of the Babe she is the fattest of the lot. Poor Henrietta is a little bit of a thing, I don't think she grows much, at least I cannot see that she does. As for Baby, she's a picture, a face as round as

¹ A play originally written for the elder Farren, usually spoken of as "The Farren."

Old Theatrical Customs

an apple and Grandma's chin with the dimples in it, and James often says, "Doesn't she look like mother?"

James wants to know if you will send him a paper, as he has promised to send the same to a very good friend of his at Guernsey. Oh, I was so sorry to leave our lodgings at Guernsey, I was never more comfortable in my life, and poor Mrs. Heath cried fit to break her heart, she doted on the children and they were very fond of her. Having none of her own she used to play with them like another child, she gave them all presents when we left. I was in luck's way at Guernsey, I had a beautiful silk dress for the stage given me, and six pairs of white satin shoes. The dress was very little worn, there were seven breadths in the skirt, so I took one out, and made an entire new bodice, out of the cape I made a bonnet. I wore them on our Benefit Night, and the Lady who sent it was in one of the Boxes.

* * * *

A. M. BIDDLES.

A very valuable asset was that same "benefit." My father was allowed one in each town, and although, I fancy, he had to share after the expenses, they still brought him in a good addition to his salary, for he was the low comedian, and was very popular; the masses always love the man who can make

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them laugh. The custom was that the *bénéficiaire* should endeavour to get a patron for the occasion, whose name figured at the top of the bill; then he issued tickets signed with his own name for pit, gallery, and dress circle. There were no stalls, the floor of a theatre being entirely given up to the pit. These tickets were distributed in dozens to one's friends, and to tradespeople and others, who did their utmost to dispose of them, and felt a sort of pride in the numbers they sold.

Another peculiarity of the time was the "bespeak night." The manager, or his representative, waited upon some local magnate, soliciting his patronage. If the local magnate acquiesced, he selected the evening, and also *bespoke* the play, and the evening's entertainment was announced as under the patronage of his Worship the Mayor, or of that of Lieut.-Colonel So-and-so, whose friends would then fill the dress circle and whose tradesmen would think it their duty to appear in the pit, so that a numerous and brilliant audience could therefore be counted on.

After Mr. Henry Betty came Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean. The "stars" in those days brought no actors with them, they brought only themselves and relied upon the stock company for their support. In the repertory of the Keans was a now forgotten drama called *The*

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean

Stranger, from the German of Kotzebue, in which three children were required, one, however, was only in the first act, whilst the other two were not seen until the last. My sister Clara (aged five and a half) "doubled" the parts of the Count's son and "The Stranger's" daughter. As Mrs. Kean carried round with her the dresses for the children, we were taken up to their hotel to have them fitted on, after which Mrs. Kean gave us some lunch. As the waiter was about to remove the things my sister Clara said in an anxious voice, "Isn't there any pudding?" I, being the elder, felt that this was a sad breach of etiquette, and said, "Oh, Clara!" But Mrs. Kean laughingly questioned the waiter, whereupon an apple tart and cream made their appearance, and all was joy. Mrs. Kean had then no child of her own, and she begged my father to let her adopt my sweet little sister, but though he and my mother were poor, and although they fully realized all the advantages that their child would gain, they loved her too tenderly to let her go.

My childish abilities in the musical line were often turned to account, for between the two pieces (there were always two) I actually sang, sometimes a comic duet with my father, and sometimes a little song by myself. I still possess a tiny shoe with a thick wooden sole

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worn by me as a charity girl, whilst my father represented an overgrown charity boy. The refrain to each verse of the song ran as follows :—

He. I like school.

She. And so do I.

He. To be good children then we'll try.
With joy to shout shall be our rule—

Both. Success to every Charity School.

Another song was that of a Flower Girl, which I sang with a basket of flowers suspended from my neck, which basket was usually supplied with lovely blossoms from the conservatories of kind-hearted patrons of the theatre.

Sometimes I was actually engaged to take part in a concert given at the local Assembly Rooms. On one such occasion after I had finished, my mother was taking me through the audience (the only way of egress) when a lady, unnoticed by her, caught my hand, and placing something in it, closed my fingers over it and whispered “You little darling.” On reaching home I said “Mamma, a lady gave me such a big penny.” And my mother said with delight, “Why, it’s a crown; and you shall have a pretty new froek.”

I was eight years old when my poor mother’s health began to fail. Consumptive symptoms appeared, and, as remedies which now rescue so many victims were then unknown, the disease

Covent Garden Theatre

gained upon her with alarming strides. At last my father had to resign his engagement, and we all went to my grandfather's farm in Leicestershire, where after a few months' suffering my mother died, leaving my father, then only twenty-nine, a widower with four little daughters, the youngest only two years of age.

I and my sister Clara were then sent to a school near Nottingham, the two youngest children being taken charge of by my grandmother. After some months' preparation my father and his youngest brother Tom started upon a tour with a comic lecture entitled:—"Pickings from *Punch*," compiled mostly of extracts from that publication, interspersed with my father's comic songs, and illustrated with dissolving views which Uncle Tom manipulated. This lasted, I believe, about a year, and the next thing I remember is that he was engaged at Covent Garden Theatre, where my aunt took me one night to see him play. Such a formidable bill:

ANTIGONE (*With Mendelssohn's music*)

Antigone MISS VANDENHOFF

AND THE PANTOMIME OF

MOTHER GOOSE.

After that engagement my father went to Astley's Amphitheatre, where they produced

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

stirring equestrian dramas. I think he must have remained there for two or three seasons. At the end of the engagement he married again, Malvina Bridges, the daughter of the ringmaster. With the money saved from these engagements he became manager of a small theatre near the Westminster Bridge Road, which has long since been swept away by modern improvements. We had a four-storied house in Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, then a much frequented theatrical neighbourhood.

About that time we had a servant, a middle-aged woman, who had a peculiar hobby. She had been for years a collector of street ballads. They were printed upon long narrow strips of paper, and sold in the streets by hawkers, who carried them, hoisted on high, affixed to T-shaped pieces of wood, from which they fluttered like streamers. They were usually about a yard long, and were sold at the price of one halfpenny. I used to hear her crooning these whilst she was doing her work, and my child-like curiosity was at once aroused. We had several confidential chats about these lyrics, and one day she took me into her room and showed me her collection. There were rolls and rolls of them. Of course, I wanted to read them, and was allowed that privilege, but they were certainly not "milk for babes." There were a few nautical ballads, but the majority of

Old Ballads

them recounted tales of adventure—highway robbery—burglary—coining—and even a case or two of murder. Claude Duval, Gentleman Jack, Dick Turpin, and Jack Sheppard were some of the heroes.

With my aptitude for quick study, I committed a lot of these to memory, as I found them so extremely fascinating; but with the exception of a few disjointed lines, they have now completely faded from my remembrance. I can only recall one in its entirety, supposed to be written by a young gentleman sentenced to death, in a time when highway robbery was followed by the extreme penalty of the law. This poetic gem is, I think, worth quoting, as a curiosity.

“ At seventeen I took a wife,
I loved her dearly, as I loved my life,
And, to maintain her both fine and gay,
I went a-robbin’ on the ’ighway ! ”

The gentleman evidently lived a dual life, as a verse later on says—

“ I robbed much gold, I do declare,
And got a place round by Grosvenor Square;
I shut the shutters and bade them good-night,
And then went home to my heart’s delight.”

After which he proceeds as follows—

“ To Covent Garden I went my way
All with my bloomin’ to see the play.
There Fielding’s gang did me pursue—
Took unawares by that cursed crew ! ”

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Fielding, it may be mentioned, was the celebrated Bow Street detective. Some very modest requests are embodied in the last two verses.

“ Oh! when I'm dead and in my grave,
A decent funeral let me have:
Six Highwaymen to carry me—
Give them broadswords and sweet Liberty!

“ Six blooming maids to bear my pall—
Give them white gloves and ribbons all.
And when I'm dead they'll speak the truth—
'There's gone a wild and a wicked youth!'

I can remember just a fragment of another ballad entitled “ On the Banks of Sweet Dundee,” in which a wicked nobleman pursues a village maiden (who is beloved by William).

“ He put his arm right round her waist, and said, ‘ Ah,
do not frown!’
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning
gown;
That wicked lord then drew his sword, and said, ‘ Mine
shall you be,
For I mean to banish William from the Banks of Sweet
Dundee!’ ”

William, of course, arrives in time to save his lady love, and Nemesis overtakes the naughty nobleman, though in what way I forget, but the ballad ended—

“ That wicked lord for all his crimes soon paid the penalty,
And Maria married William on the Banks of Sweet
Dundee! ”

My Sister and I leave Home

A few doors from us resided Flexmore, who was celebrated as a Clown. He was more than this, however, he was an excellent dancer, and had a large class for stage dancing. My father placed me with him as a pupil, and I remained so for two or three years, at the same time playing such parts as were suitable to my age, until I reached the important one of sixteen, when I blossomed out into leading parts, Ophelia, Desdemona, etc., as well as melodramatic heroines.

Then came a great break in my life—leaving home. A comedian named Suter had a daughter who was engaged as “leading lady” for the season at the Theatre Royal, Southampton, and my father, knowing him well, thought it would be an excellent chance for me if I could accompany her, to play seconds, or, as they were technically termed, “walking ladies.” He secured the engagement for me, but only a week or two before the time arranged for us to start, the news came that Miss Suter was too ill to undertake the journey, but hoped to go down later. An arrangement was then made with the manager that my sister Clara should accompany me. She was barely fifteen, but was a tall and handsome girl, and was available for such parts as little waiting-maids, pages, the Fairy Queen in the pantomime, etc. The pantomimes in provincial

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theatres were then played entirely by the stock company, the only extra engagements made being the Harlequin and perhaps the Clown.

And so we two girls started on our new life. Our combined salaries barely reached £2, but I resolved never to trouble my father for money, if I could possibly avoid it; and during the following ten months I never did, save once, when we had a week's vacation before Christmas. We both felt very proud to think we were earning our own living, and were no longer a burden on our good father, who had a somewhat large family (by his second wife) to feed, clothe and educate.

Upon reaching Southampton we found that Mr. Holmes (our manager) had kindly deputed some one to meet us at the station, and show us the way to some rooms which were recommended. They were in St. Michael's Square, within a few minutes of the theatre. Two comfortable rooms, where the kind-hearted landlady cooked, waited and looked after us, for the small sum of eight shillings a week inclusive.

The company engaged were as follows:—
Mr. Chas. Calvert (lead), Mr. and Mrs. Rainford (heavies), Mr. Greatorix (walking gentleman), Mr. Frederick Everill, afterwards so well known on the London Stage (eccentric comedy),

Miss M. E. Braddon

Mr. Montague (low comedy), Mr. Brandon (various), Miss Suter (leading lady), myself (walking ditto), Miss Mary Seyton (also walking ditto), and my sister.

At the first rehearsal it was announced that Miss Suter would be unable to join us in time for the opening week, and so her parts were handed over to me, and I became leading lady with an additional four shillings a week tacked on to my salary. The poor girl's illness, after months of suffering, proved fatal, and I therefore retained the position for the whole of the season.

In the house next to ours in St. Michael's Square, the apartments were occupied by Miss Mary Seyton and her mother (Seyton was merely a *nom de théâtre*, their real name being Braddon). Mrs. Seyton (as we always addressed her) was a refined, intellectual lady of independent means. She was therefore enabled to indulge in the luxury of hospitality, from which, it is needless to say, the rest of us were debarred. And on Sunday afternoons my sister and I, Mr. Calvert and one or two other members of the company were often invited to tea, and by these pleasant informal meetings we came to know more of each other than the ordinary association of a green-room unfolds.

Miss Seyton played her favourite music for

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us; she sketched, with her clever pen, our features and our mental peculiarities; she could copy a cartoon of Punch line by line so cleverly that it might almost have been taken for the original drawing. I fancy Mrs. Seyton was a subscriber to Mudie's, for the latest novels were often seen upon their table, whilst many of the standard authors graced their bookcase. Mary and I were omnivorous readers, and in spite of my hard work I managed to rush through a formidable quantity of literature, with which she very kindly supplied me. It embraced everything from Carlyle and Ruskin to Harrison Ainsworth and Fenimore Cooper. I remember, even now, poring over *Sartor Resartus*, with the wretched conviction that I couldn't *quite* understand it.

Tennyson, I think, was Mary's chief literary idol; she could reel off his poetry by the yard. One night I had gone to the theatre earlier than usual, in order to get dressed leisurely, and run through my part as I did so, when, as I ascended the stairs to my dressing-room (*our* dressing-room, as four of us occupied it), I heard a female voice in loud wailing tones, together with a word not usually included in a lady's vocabulary. I crept quietly up and peeped over the top stair. There was Mary, *en négligé*, her hair hanging loosely over her shoulders. She was gazing intently into a large

The Leading Gentleman

looking-glass, and flourishing her hairbrush wildly, as she again repeated—

“The cruel arrow glanced aside,
The damnèd arrow glanced aside
And pierced thy heart, my love, my bride,
Oriana!

These were happy times for us two girls. We each had our first sweetheart. Mine was the “leading gentleman,” whilst Mary accepted little attentions from Mr. Brandon, and as an instance of her cleverness, when I said one day, “Well, Mary, I wouldn’t be seen with a brand on,” she retorted, “Well, your taste I call *vert*.”

And now for the leading gentleman.

Charles Calvert was the son of a London merchant. He was first sent to a school at Cricklewood, but finished his education at King’s College. A lad of a strongly religious temperament, his ambition was to enter the Church, but his father, who had failed in business (chiefly owing to the rascality of a partner, who had absconded), could not afford the necessary funds for his training. So he became a traveller for a city firm that dealt chiefly in straw hats. At times he came across influential people, and in the course of conversation would mention his great desire for a clerical life. Some one at last laid his case before the Bishop of Oxford, by whose suggestion he

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was to be placed in some theological seminary (*gratis*), there to be qualified for missionary work. The whole thing was all but settled, when by some chance he came across the *Works* of Emanuel Swedenborg. Their poesy and mysticism appealed to him very strongly, and he felt that he could no longer accept the tenets of the Church of England. Having an appointment soon after with one of his clerical patrons, he mentioned his misgivings, when the latter replied, "But, my dear sir, that need not debar your entrance to the Church of England. I know a little of Swedenborg's works. Pure fantasy! Throw them on the fire, and think no more of them." His conscience, however, would not allow him to believe one thing and teach another, and so the missionary idea was abandoned and he became an ardent follower of Swedenborg, retaining his position in the city firm.

I may mention here that his father was somewhat of a religious enthusiast, though with an unstable faith. He was "a seeker after truth," studying various creeds, and frequenting various chapels, caught for a while by each of them; and when his son Charles had reached the age of twelve, the boy had been baptized into no less than four different denominations. The last was the Irvingite Church in Hatton Garden.

E. A. Sothern

Commercial life, however, became more and more repellent, chiefly on account of its petty trickeries, and Mr. Calvert cast about in his mind for some more congenial means of livelihood. At last he resolved to try the stage, and went to a theatrical agent for advice and assistance. The profession was still not overcrowded, and a young man whose speech betokened education, and whose dress was quite up to date, stood a fair chance of being engaged. He was sent down to Plymouth to play anything they cared to entrust him with, for the (commencing) salary of a guinea a week, the stage manager being a Mr. Douglas Scott, who some few years after went to America, and became a star in the theatrical world as the celebrated Lord Dundreary (E. A. Sothern).

En passant I may mention that the creation of Lord Dundreary was very gradual and commenced in this way:—Mr. Sothern was a member of a stock company in the States. An American star came there with a play called *The American Cousin*, the star playing Asa Trenchard. A small part of an eccentric English nobleman was handed to Sothern, who said to the stage manager, “Look here, I can’t play this; it’s not in my line at all!” The stage manager replied that it *was*, that he *could* play it, adding that there was no other member of the company to do it, and

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that if Sothern refused it it would put him in a fix. Eventually Sothern took the part home and read it through.

The following morning he said to the stage manager, "I don't mind playing this if you'll let me do what I like with it." Permission was given and he *did* do what he liked with it, until the play at last became Lord Dundreary, with Asa Trenchard "a bad second." Sothern afterwards acquired the play and brought it to London, where at the Haymarket Theatre it had a long and brilliant run. I will give a brief sketch of this extraordinary creation.

A tall thin man with wig and long whiskers, very black, suggesting hair dye, wearing an eye-glass, a vacant look, sometimes raised helplessly to the ceiling, a slight stutter. Frequently tripping over the carpet or some article left upon the floor; delicate white hands, with rather conspicuous diamond rings; faultlessly dressed, with frequent changes of costume. In the pocket of every coat he would find a white pocket-handkerchief, neatly folded, which he would take out, unfold slowly, look at vacantly for a second and replace in his pocket. Here are some of the inanities which drew shouts of laughter from the London public.

Lord Dundreary is visiting a country seat



Junior Carlton Club.

J. Calvert

Thanks for
letter - but
I have decided
never to manage
a Recte..

Yours
E. A. Sothern

Lord Dundreary

where there is a model farm. His host's daughter is showing him round.

Lord D. D-do you like cheese ?

She. No.

Lord D. D-does your brother like cheese ?

She. I haven't a brother. (*A pause.*)

Lord D. (aside). I wish she'd talk, I hate to lead the conversation. (*Aloud*) If-if you had a brother, d-do you think he'd like cheese ?

She. I really can't say.

Lord D. (looking up at the pigeon-cote). D-do you like pigeons ?

She. Oh, yes.

Lord D. I don't; such stupid birds, especially the one that flies a little way, turns head over heels and flies back again. I hate a bird that doesn't know its own mind.

Some one later on remarks, "Well, birds of a feather flock together."

Lord D. Oh, but that's all stupid nonsense, you know. How can a lot of birds flock with one feather ? Only one bird could have it, you know, and he'd have to flock by himself, and even then with only one feather he'd f-flock all over on one side.

My work at Southampton embraced every pos-

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sible kind of entertainment, and, like Hamlet's players, we attempted "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastorical-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical," etc., etc. Our répertoire also included several burlesques and a pantomime, *Bluebeard*, in which I played Fatima, Mr. Calvert Selim, and Mr. Fred Everill The Great Bashaw.

Although the bill was changed every night, we frequently repeated plays at intervals, whilst the most popular works of Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard the Third* (Cibber's version), were put up occasionally, "to give us a *rest*"—every member of the company being thoroughly conversant with them, and able to play their respective parts without a rehearsal.

Towards the end of the season I was accorded the privilege of a benefit. The theatre was small and the prices low, but my share of the profits, after all expenses had been paid, amounted to what seemed to me a little fortune—£8 15s.

The season came to an end, bringing its sad partings, and Clara and I returned home. Soon afterwards we went down to Gravesend and played at the Theatre Royal for some five or six weeks. Mr. Calvert finding his way there for a few days, and playing for the manageress's benefit. He then insisted upon

An American Manager

addressing my father on the subject of our engagement, and wrote to him accordingly. My father replied that he could give no answer until he had seen me, and on my return home I had an exceedingly *mauvais quart d'heure*—"silly young idiot" being one of the terms applied to me!

An American manager, Mr. Thomas Barry, was then in London, making engagements for the beautiful new theatre just completed in Boston, Massachusetts. The United States were then an "unknown quantity" to the English people. It seems almost incredible that there was only one line of steamers between Liverpool and New York—The Cunard—and only one vessel sailing each week, and even that would not have been run at a profit had it not been subsidized for the carrying of the British Mails. (The postage on a letter at that time was a shilling.) The lowest fare, first class, was thirty guineas. Actors were, as a general rule, afraid to venture out there, foreseeing the possibility of being left without salary and unable to reach home again.

My father fee'd one of the theatrical agents to induce Mr. Barry to come over to his small theatre in Lambeth, to see us play, and the visit was promised. A comedy was put up in which he, his wife, my sister and I all had parts; Mr. Barry arrived, and we were all in

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a state of nervous excitement. On the following day an offer came for the engagement of Clara and myself.

My father then had an interview with Mr. Barry and represented that life for some years had been a struggle, that it would be a painful trial to let his daughters leave him, they being still so young. Could Mr. Barry utilize the services of himself and wife? Mr. Barry did. The inclusive salary was not great, but my father, knowing nothing whatever of American prices, considered that it would be sufficient to keep us all in comfort, and the bond was signed. Then came the breaking up of our home, the furniture was sold, my father only retaining a few small things and the linen and cutlery, which we took with us—I cannot say “plate,” as we possessed none.

My father had four children by his second wife, only two of whom were living, little girls of four and six. New frocks were needed for the lot of us, and these my step-mother—a most capable needlewoman—and I made ourselves. All sorts of necessaries for the voyage had to be provided, and packing-cases stood in every room in the house.

Oh, the bustle and excitement of those few weeks! My father, unable, of course, to afford Cunard state-rooms, and naturally shrinking from any idea of steerage, had found a sailing-

We Leave England

vessel about to leave from the London docks for Boston on the day we wished, the *Sumter*, a small barque of five hundred tons. He found there was just sufficient accommodation for our party, and that the lot of us, my father and his wife, we six girls and a kind-hearted Irish woman who had been our servant for some time, and was warmly attached to the younger children, nine of us in all, would be taken across for £60.

Mr. Calvert (with my father's permission) came to bid me good-bye. He was, of course, far more unhappy than I was. Nearly always it is the one who is left behind who suffers most. I had the prospect of weeks upon the sea, of which I was always passionately fond, then a new land, a new home, a ten months' engagement at a beautiful new theatre. All this was so fascinating that I am afraid my sorrow at leaving my lover was very much ameliorated. At length we started, and a letter from Mr. Calvert bidding me "God-speed" reached me just as we were leaving.

CHAPTER II

WE GO TO AMERICA

AT first our voyage was most enjoyable; we were the only passengers, the deck was ours to sit and lie wherever we pleased, and over the saloon table where we dined there hung a brass cage containing our pet canaries, which my father had thoughtfully managed to bring away with him. Their music gave to our meal a sense of home.

But alas! there came a change, the winds shifted, they became adverse and tempestuous; *mal de mer* claimed us as its victims. The captain sat alone at the little dining-table, and our poor canaries moped in silence on their perches.

We were seven days beating up to Plymouth, and then stood out to the broad Atlantic. The rest of the family soon recovered, but I, alas, could not shake off the horrible nausea. Day after day I lay on my cabin bed, fed upon slops, until the captain told my father that I must be brought on deck, or I might possibly have ship fever. I implored them not to move me. I only gained relief by lying perfectly still.

On the Atlantic

The captain, however, was inexorable. Four of the sailors were deputed to carry me up, bed and all, and lay me on the deck, carrying me down again in the evening. After two or three days of this treatment, I began to recover rapidly, got a tremendous appetite, and once more experienced the *joie de vivre*. Then my brain activity returned, and I felt the inertia; I wanted to be doing something. I had brought note-books and pencils with me, and I wrote long letters which were to be posted on arrival. Then that terrible complaint, the *cacoethes scribendi*, took hold of me, and I perpetrated rhymes and acrostics, of which only two remain in my memory, and these I venture to quote, with apologies. They are certainly suggestive of the Early Victorian school-girl.

THE SUMTER

(*Sumter was the name of an American general*)

So proudly she sails on the wide, boundless ocean,
Upon whose broad bosom her shadow is cast,
Mounting its waves with such free, graceful motion
That she must indeed be a thing of the past—
Ere the brave hearts which manned her from Albion's
shore
Remember her skill and her prowess no more.

GEORGE HUMPHREY

(*Our Captain*)

Great power hast thou : Oh ! use it then in kindness,
Every harsh thought should from thy mind have flown ;

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Oh! ne'er let passion, with it's maddening blindness
Rear in thy heart her undisputed throne.
Goodness and Mercy are the gifts of Heaven,
E'en thou one day must sue to be forgiven.

Have pity for the small faults of another :
Upon this earth, with sin and sorrow rife,
Man must be lenient with his erring brother,
Pardoning and quelling the wild storms of strife.
Humanity still bears some trace of Heaven,
Reared in his heart, in Eden's vales and groves,
E'en though he was from that fair garden driven,
Yet his stern soul still pities, and still loves.

Our little barque made slow progress, we were frequently becalmed. Once, for three successive days, we lay with sails furled and the hot sun beating down upon us, and when we ought to have been landing in Boston, we were still some hundreds of miles away from it. Our food and water deteriorated sadly. Tinned provisions and chilled meat were then unknown, and we were at last reduced to salt beef and pickled pork supplied from barrels. The water acquired an unpleasant taste, and could only be drunk after being boiled, and our tea and coffee were *minus* milk. A cow was on board, but after a few days buffeting, she, too, became an invalid, like the rest of us. Some forty or fifty live fowls had also been placed on board, but they had now to be very sparingly used, and only once a week did a couple or trio

We Reach Boston, U.S.

of "chuckies" vary the monotony of our menu.

At length we reached the coast of Newfoundland, where we anchored for three or four hours, and the men let out their fishing nets, which they drew in again, heavily laden. The deck was very nearly covered with great codfish, and one magnificent halibut, which was immediately cooked for our dinner. Oh, what a luxury was that halibut!

Upon landing we found that the theatre had opened on the previous night, with the comedy of *The Rivals*, in which I was to have played the sentimental Julia, and the programme said—

Julia MISS TAYLOR.

(In consequence of the absence of a lady who has been six weeks at sea.)

This programme was framed, and hung upon one of the walls of the foyer. It hangs there to this day.

My opening part was Lydia in *The Love Chase*. It is a trying part, long speeches in blank verse, with very little action. The theatre was a large one, capable of seating nearly 3,000 people. I had never before appeared before so vast an audience. I was very nervous, and altogether I think that I did not make a very favourable impression.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

The company was a large and powerful one—I forget the number of gentlemen, but I know there were thirteen ladies. The soubrette was Mrs. John Wood, afterwards so great a favourite on the London stage, whose charming musical powers and piquant acting gained for her at once an enormous success.

The fact of the company being so numerically strong rendered the work lighter, and during the whole season, there was scarcely a week in which I did not have two, and sometimes three, nights to myself. Then came the great American star, Edwin Forrest. He was a man of powerful physique, who then strode the American theatrical world like a colossus. The key-note of his acting was intensity. I remember a gentleman saying to me, “Nothing in the way of dramatic art has ever impressed me so much as Forrest in *Othello*. You see him there every muscle quivering, and the big veins in his forehead standing out, in his magnificent rage. It is overwhelming.”

Edwin Forrest brought with him a play written especially for him, in which he enacted an Indian Chief, *Metamora*. The heroine was a white girl, aged 18, named Oceana, from the fact of her having been born upon the sea, and it was with a large amount of trepidation, and a small amount of pride,

Edwin Forrest

that I learned that Oceana had been allotted to me.

Metamora having been played by Forrest in other cities, the whole of the business had been already arranged, and he was able to tell me exactly what was required. This he did most kindly, giving me words of encouragement, and the result was that I made a success. Another play in which I appeared with him was *Damon and Pythias*. In this I was cast for the leading part of Calanthe. In the last act her lover's life hangs upon a thread. He (Pythias) has offered himself as hostage for Damon, who has been condemned to die for some military blunder. Damon has departed to say good-bye to his wife and children. If he does not return by sunset, the hostage is to be executed in his stead. Damon's return is delayed by his faithful slave, who, in order to save his master's life, slays his horse, and the execution of Pythias is imminent. Calanthe, in her anguish, thus appeals to the setting sun—

“Thou Minister of Light, and measurer of Eternity,
In this great purpose, stay thy going down,
Great Sun, behind the confines of the world.
For while thine eye is opened on mankind
Hope will abide within thy blessed beams;
They dare not do the murder in thy presence.
(*Shrieks.*) Alas: All heedless of my frantic cry
He plunges from the precipice of Heaven.”

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Forrest, at rehearsal, was watching me narrowly, and when it came to this said, "Don't be afraid, put your whole soul into it. Let your frantie cry *be* a frantie ery. Never mind if it leaves you exhausted and half fainting, so much the better." He stood in the first entrance at night, listening to the scene, and at the end of my speech, he himself led the peal of applause which followed it: an act of kindness for which I felt deeply grateful; it raised me immeasurably in the opinion of my fellow-workers, as Forrest's approbation was a hall-mark of success.

For those who are interested in the play of *Damon and Pythias* I may add that the old Greek legend is followed closely. Pythias succeeds in getting another horse, and arrives panting and exhausted, but in time to save his friend, and the Emperor Dionysius, who has been watching in the crowd, disguised, is so struck by this act of bravery, that he pardons the offender, and all ends happily. The only other play in which I appeared with Forrest was *Richard the Third*, in which I was the Lady Anne.

Amongst the scribblings which I perpetrated on board the *Sumter* was the following—

ABSENT

I think of thee, though far away
In foreign lands,

Rhymes

I give thy fate, whene'er I pray
 To angel hands.
I know that thou art sad and 'lorn
 Now we're apart—
The mildew blights the harvest corn
 And grief, the heart.

E'en now thou'rt wandering 'mid the scenes
 Of our sweet past,
And saddening thoughts thy memory gleans
 With woe o'ereast;
And, when thou stand'st by that old tree
 'Neath which we sate,
Its falling leaves will seem to thee
 Type of thy fate.

When next we meet, the snows of age
 May crown my head,
The faded scroll of memory's page
 Be blank and dead;
My aged heart no past retrace,
 Its chords unstrung
Like that sad harp of Judah's race
 On willows hung.

Love's smile is changed to sorrow's sigh,
 Bright hope to tears,
Yet, when the storm-cloud has passed by,
 The bow appears;
So, o'er thy woes undaunted rise
 With this belief,
That, as the alembic purifies,
 E'en so does grief.

My father found one day the little book
which contained these lines and showed them
to some one to whom he had been introduced,

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with the result that they appeared in one of the Boston papers, and this was followed by a visit from Mr. Weston, the editor of *The American Union*, who said, "Can you write prose?"

"Well," I answered, with hesitation, "I dare say I could if I tried, but I shouldn't like to answer for its quality."

"You see," said my editor, "we never pay for verses, but if you could send us some small sketches we should be very glad to give you liberal terms."

I promised that I would try, and during the whole of my stay in Boston, which lasted two years, I inflicted numbers of short stories upon his readers. I still have by me some of these sentimental effusions, and, reading them with the eyes of to-day, I marvel that any editor could have thought it worth his while to pay for them.

But "other times, other man"—u-scripts!

At all events they answered one purpose: I had to provide my own stage dresses out of a somewhat inadequate salary, and many a costume was partly paid for by my immature efforts at fiction-writing.

During the season came Rachel, the great French tragedienne, with her French company. Whenever great attractions came to the Boston Theatre for which the stock company were

Statue de Virginie
Bon pour Jean Percey
le 2.9 de 1855
Rachel
Boston

Rachel

not required, the members of it were privileged to use any seats that were not occupied, and therefore I was enabled to see Rachel in several plays. On the last performance she appeared as *Virginie*, and afterwards chanted "The Marseillaise," with which she had previously roused the Parisians to a fury of enthusiasm.

After the tragedy, the curtain was raised upon a landscape with a Greek temple in the centre, before which, upon a staff implanted in the ground, was a huge tricoloured flag. Rachel appeared, still in the simple white costume she had worn for *Virginie*; she came slowly down to the footlights, the band played the air so faintly that you only could catch the beat, and Rachel's impassioned words, rose rhythmically above it. After the first few lines she ascended a step or two of the temple, snatched the tricolor from its socket and raised it proudly as she cried—

"Aux armes ! Aux armes !"

The effect was electrical !

I endeavoured to obtain Rachel's autograph, but without success. I found she had refused it to every one. Our chief lord of the treasury, however, was kind enough to give me a pass which she had written in her dressing-room for two friends. It had been torn in half by the

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cheek-taker, who was simply fulfilling his duty, ignorant of the piece of vandalism he was perpetrating.

Also during the season came Grisi and Mario, and again, owing to the theatre's great capacity and the raised prices, I was allowed to be present nearly every night. I witnessed the great *diva's* impersonations of Norma, Lucrezia Borgia and Semiramide.

After a couple of months or so my father found that his services were little needed in the company; he found too that the salary he had accepted for the lot of us was wholly inadequate for our expenses, and, seeing a chance of doing better, he asked the manager (Mr. Thos. Barry) to release himself and wife, Clara and myself remaining. This Mr. Barry agreed to. My father having got an American actor to join him in the speculation, he formed a small company and booked a tour, the programme consisting of four or five farces. At the suggestion of his partner, he took out his papers of naturalization, and became an American citizen, as foreigners were then at a discount in the small American towns.

I and my sister were thus left to our own resources, and we took up our quarters in Summer Street, which is now occupied by warehouses, but was then a very attractive spot,

A Summer Tour

with its rows of bright red-brick houses, that had outside Venetian shutters of vivid green, and front doors painted white, with silver handles and bells. There we had a large, airy room, with full board, for the small sum of £1 a week each, and there we found a home for nearly two years, the kind-hearted landlady always speaking of us as her children.

Just before the season drew to a close, Mr. Barry engaged us for the one to follow, at a slightly increased salary. But we had two months' vacation and our funds were limited. However, an actor of the company came to us one day and said that he and his wife were forming a small summer tour, and proposed that Clara and I should join them. The company, with one exception, was to be recruited from the ranks of the Boston Theatre, and was to be advertised as "The Boston Theatre Company," each of us being equally starred. We were to play triple bills. The salary offered was small, but he guaranteed its being sufficient to pay our weekly expenses, so we accepted.

We started at Rockland, Maine, a picturesque city with its beautiful bay, its belt of mountains, and its wide streets lined with rows of giant elms. We stayed three or four weeks, and a delightful time we had. The principal hotel was the "Thorndyke House," kept by Captain Thorndyke, who was an ardent lover

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of the theatre, and he offered the whole of the company spacious rooms and full board at five dollars a week each.

Invitations to luncheons, suppers, teas, country drives, were showered upon "The Boston Theatre Company." Once a gentleman's yacht was placed at our service for the day; we sailed down the harbour to an island, taking provisions with us. When we landed the men of our party gathered wood for a huge fire, three poles were inserted in the ground, from which was suspended a mighty cooking pot; then we girls peeled onions and potatoes, whilst the men searched for clams, and the cooking of our dinner was started. We had taken bathing dresses and towels with us, and the feminines sought a secluded spot among the rocks, and had a delightful bathe, whilst the men went to another part of the island and had a swimming match. On our return we found our dinner cooked, and sat down to our "clam chowder" with tremendous appetites. This was followed by fruits and lemonade, altogether a delicious banquet.

After the meal the men rowed off to the yacht and brought ropes ashore, which they threw over the branches of the trees and made swings for us. At last the time of departure arrived, and we got into our little boat and returned to the yacht, only to find, to our

A Yachting Adventure

dismay, that the tide had receded, and that she was aground.

Here was a dilemma ! We were nearly seven miles from the town, our only means of reaching it a small boat, which at its utmost would only carry five of us. However, a quick decision had to be arrived at. The manager and his wife, two other gentlemen and myself were to go in the boat, my sister and the others remaining on the yacht till the tide turned.

The gentlemen had an arduous task to row that boat, laden as it was, and pressed for time as we were, but we reached the shore safely, rushed to the theatre, scrambled into our clothes, and began the performance only about twenty minutes after the appointed time. The programme had of course to be altered in consequence of the absentees. After the performance we hastened back to the hotel, only to find that the yacht had not arrived, and that a steam tug had been sent out to bring her in.

Six o'clock was the last meal at the hotel—it was called supper, but included tea and coffee. The *chef* and the waiters had gone to bed, but Captain Thorndyke enlisted the services of our gentlemen, and they all descended to the lower regions, ransacked the larder, garnished a table in the dining-room

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with a miscellaneous display of eatables, and, when the belated travellers arrived (somewhere upon the stroke of midnight), we all sat down to a bountiful supper (Captain Thorndyke in the chair) and thus had a delightful finish to an exciting day.

We visited Portland, Bangor and some other towns in Maine, and then our charming little summer tour ended. We returned to our home in Summer Street in time for rehearsals for the second season at the Boston Theatre, and were warmly welcomed by our courteous manager, Thos. Barry.

We commenced with Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, in which I played Hero, and Clara Ursula. One of the stars during the season was E. L. Davenport, whose speciality was William in Douglas Jerrold's drama of *Black-eyed Susan*, I being the Susan.

We had again two opera companies, one Italian, with a répertoire of operas seldom heard now-a-days. I once more had the privilege of going in front, and heard *The Prophet*, *Ernani*, *Masaniello*, *William Tell*, and the first production in America of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. That was a memorable night, the excitement and enthusiasm being tremendous.

The other opera company was an English one, with William Harrison and Louisa Pync

Second Season at Boston Theatre

at their head. They played Auber's *Crown Diamonds*, *Maritana*, *Fra Diavolo*, and *Guy Mannering*.

In the latter I made an unexpected appearance. Susan Pync, sister of the *prima donna*, was taken ill, and a messenger came in the afternoon to know if I would go on as Julia Mannering. Now *Guy Mannering* was, to a large extent, dialogue, and during my season at Southampton it had been included in our varied programmes. They gave me a book, and in an hour I had recovered the words; the dialogue of the part, therefore, was all right; and in the concerted music Louisa Pyne bridged over the difficulty by singing that of Julia Mannering as well as her own.

About the middle of September the news arrived in Boston that the stronghold of Sevastopol had been taken by the combined forces of England, France and Sardinia. The play that night was *The Lady of Lyons*, and as I was not in the cast, I was present in the front of the house. At the end of the fourth act, where Claude goes to join the French army, the band always plays "The Marseillaise," and on this particular evening an enthusiastic cheer rose from the audience as they heard the well-known air. The band repeated it, and then burst into "God Save the Queen," when every English subject in the house rose to his

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

feet. The cheers were redoubled, and the dear old national anthem brought tears to the eyes of more than one Englishwoman there.

Somewhere about this time, too, Longfellow published his beautiful poem, "The Song of Hiawatha," and Mrs. Barrow, our principal lady, recited for several evenings "The Death of Minnehaha," clad in American-Indian costume, the stage representing a forest with an Indian wigwam. Longfellow came more than once to listen to it, and I ventured a timid request for his autograph, which he sent me.

Then came a very unexpected event. My sister Clara often had small parts to play when I was not required. We lived only about ten minutes' walk from the theatre, and as some of the company resided in the adjoining street, they frequently came part of the way together at night. I always sat up for her, and my first question was usually, "Who did you come home with?" One night her answer was "Mr. Barry." I was surprised and said, "Oh, how kind of him." For several nights her answer was the same, but I still attached no importance to it, always feeling that Mr. Barry regarded us quite from a fatherly point of view.

But one day I found my sister crying bitterly, and upon questioning her, she said,

Who, might, shall be filled with music,

And the crowd, that, in the day,

Shall, fold, their tents like the Arabs,

And as silently stand away.

Henry W. Longfellow

April 1856

A Letter from Charles Calvert

“Mr. Barry wants me to marry him!” I was amazed, for this was about the last thing that could possibly have occurred to me; but she continued, “But I have refused him.” I said, “Then, my dear girl, why are you crying so?” She answered, “Because I’ve made him so unhappy, and he’s so good.” Shortly after, she came home from rehearsal one day and said, “I’ve had a long talk with Mr. Barry again this morning, and I’ve agreed to marry him. He’s writing to Papa to-day.”

A few days later came a letter of strong remonstrance from my father, who begged her to think out the matter thoroughly, and to remember what their disparity of age would mean in the future. She replied, saying that she felt she would never like any one better, that he was her ideal of a good and noble man, and that she should keep her word.

Eventually the marriage was arranged to take place at the end of the season. Then came another surprise for me—a long and ardent letter from Mr. Calvert. He had improved his position—had a two years’ engagement with Shepherd and Creswick at the Surrey Theatre, as stage manager, and to play “seconds.” He protested that, to him, I was still, etc., etc.—and that he was still cherishing the hope that, etc., etc.

I wrote to my father, enclosing C. C.’s letters,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

and received an answer that he thought it was foolish of me—but that, as I was old enough to know my own mind, I must do as I thought best. And so our old engagement was taken up again.

When I told my future brother-in-law of the arrangement, he said, “Well then, *we’ll* take you over to England, Addie. It shall be our honeymoon trip, and as your father cannot be there, I’ll give you away.”

Towards the close of the season, Mr. Barry allowed me to have a farewell benefit, by which I cleared nearly £50. With this I was enabled to purchase a modest trousseau. My dear sister, however, insisted upon giving me my wedding dress, and I was left with £20 in hand for my stay in London, previous to the “happy day.”

The season finished, and a few weeks later my sister was married in the drawing-room of her pretty new home in Dover Street, Boston, where I stayed with them until I sailed for England.

A fortnight or so later, just before I sailed, clouds came over the sunshine. Some defalcations had been discovered in the books of the Boston Theatre. Accounts were alleged to have been paid, which were found to be still owing, and receipts forged. My brother-in-law came to me, very much troubled, and said, “Addie, my girl, there’s no wedding

I Return to England

tour for me this year. I shall have to go through all the books—not only of this season, but of the last, for I cannot tell how far this thing has gone on!” And so I had to return alone—Mr. Barry kindly paying my passage (which was then thirty guineas), and taking me on board the *America*, a Cunard paddle steamer of 1,825 tons, where he found among the passengers several friends to whom he introduced me. They were Mr. G. A. Storey (the celebrated sculptor) and his wife, who were on their way to Rome; Mr. Richard Dana, a noted solicitor (and author of *Two Years Before the Mast*); Mr. T. G. Appleton (of the big firm of Boston publishers, and a brother-in-law of Longfellow); and the Hon. Wm. Napier, a cousin of the celebrated hero. With such delightful company, and an entire absence of *mal de mer*, it need scarcely be said that the time passed merrily. Dana and Appleton gave great amusement with their impromptu verse, of which the following is a specimen—

“ Waiters abound,
And with a sound
Of crashing plates
Each waiter waits.
Oh, aren't we glad
To get sal-ad
And devilled thighs
Of turkeys nisc—”

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this being their usual supper. They often dared each other to cap a difficult rhyme. One was—"The eod and the halibut"—"Were put in the jolly-boat" was the immediate response.

Our pleasant voyage, which occupied "a fortnight and odd days," at last came to an end. We landed at Liverpool. I said good-bye to my clever friends, and went on to London alone, Mr. Calvert being unable to meet me on account of his work, and also being in doubt as to my arrival—telegraphy not having been discovered.

I found that he had arranged with Shepherd and Creswick to have a benefit at the end of the season, in order to give me an opportunity of appearing. I selected the play of *The Hunchback* and played Julia. A few weeks after, we were married at Lambeth Parish Church.

We were engaged for the season at the Surrey Theatre, and only a few weeks after its commencement my husband had a great sorrow in the death of his father, who expired very suddenly. When the "Surrey" closed, my husband (who had come into possession of a legacy of £500) found that a small company was being formed to tour some of the principal cities during the summer. Several of the persons interested were members of Phelps's

An English Summer Tour

company at Sadler's Wells (at that time a guarantee of excellence), and my husband approached them with a view to being the fourth partner in the speculation. He succeeded, and the company comprised the following:—Henry Marston, Anthony Young, Nye Chart (the manager of the Theatre Royal, Brighton) and C. Calvert as the four partners. There were other actors, but I cannot remember their names. The ladies were Mrs. Henry Marston, Miss Bessie Marston, two others whose names are also forgotten, and myself. I, however, could only play during the first part of the season, as an impending domestic event rendered my withdrawal imperative.

The speculation was not a financial success, but C. C. considered it was of great advantage to him. The theatres of the principal cities, including Manchester, had been opened to them, and he had also gained in method and in finish by playing important parts with important actors.

After a few weeks my husband took me back to London, where I remained until the finish of the tour, when he rejoined me—but, during his absence, my first little son, Leonard, arrived. The next year we were both again with Shepherd and Creswick.

About this time there came some sad

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

news from my sister Clara. The Boston Theatre had met with financial disaster. My brother-in-law, who had invested heavily in it, had lost everything, and they had been compelled to give up their pretty home. Mr. Barry, however, had many warm and generous friends, and a little later he was offered the stage management of a theatre in Chicago, where my sister afterwards became the leading lady, and where they remained for several years.

When the Surrey Theatre was closing for the summer, Mr. Hermann Vezin—then a handsome young man, and reputed wealthy—came to C. C. and said, “I want to get the Surrey Theatre for the summer, but if it’s known that I’m the applicant the terms will be enormous. Now, will you get it in your name, and be my stage manager?” This was accomplished, and *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King John* were produced,—the parts of Lady Macbeth, Queen Gertrude and Constance being played by Mrs. Hermann Vezin (Mr. Vezin’s first wife), a somewhat matronly lady, many years older than her husband. I only played Ophelia.

CHAPTER III

THE DRAMATIC COLLEGE AT WOKING

ABOUT this time an important movement was made for the purpose of ameliorating the lot of aged actors and actresses. An influential committee was formed, appeals made in the public papers, and every means used to obtain the necessary funds. The response was most gratifying. Money flowed in freely, not only from nearly all the members of the profession, but from the public generally. Some acres of ground were bought at Woking, and the building was to consist of a massive central hall and tower, in which the masters and committee were to have their annual banquets. From this hall were to spring, on each side, eight or ten small cottages for the pensioners. The building was finished, the spacious grounds laid out, and the first lot of pensioners installed. They were to receive ten shillings a week, out of which they had to provide themselves with food, washing and clothing. A charwoman went the round of the cottages in the early morning. She lighted the fires and swept up the rooms, but

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

the pensioners had to cook and clean for themselves during the rest of the day. They were shut away from all their old friends and associations, the journey being an expense that made visiting prohibitive. In the long winter nights there was no dropping into a theatre by the acting manager's kind permission, no going out to have a cup of tea with a relative—all was one deadly level of dulness.

Twice a year the master and members of the committee went down in state, had a grand dinner in the Central Hall (to which, of course, the inmates of the cottages were invited), congratulated each other on the great success of the Institution, made self-laudatory speeches, which the pensioners were expected to cheer, and returned to town by train in the evening thoroughly satisfied with themselves. In aid of the fund there was every year a grand Dramatic Fête at the Crystal Palace, where dignity and refinement were thrown to the winds, and the public appealed to on the lowest possible plane.

One charming actress—who was also a fascinating danseuse—took there all her old satin shoes, and sold them by auction, the “johnnies” of the day suspending them from their coat-buttons by the ribbon sandals. Another trieksy lady took a large basket of

The Dramatic College at Woking

strawberries, selling each one at half-a-crown *after she had kissed it*. I could recount other charming interludes, *ad nauseam*, but think these specimens will suffice.

I remember a distinguished and disgusted tragedian (who was somewhat horsey) saying that his wife had been asked to take a stall, and he replied with a decided refusal, adding that instead of *stalls*, they should be called *loose boxes*.

Another means of raising the wind was to be from the proceeds of a nautical drama. T. P. Cooke, the popular actor of sailors' parts, left in his will a sum of money, which, invested, would bring in £100 a year, and this was to be offered as a prize for the best nautical drama that was sent in. The play was to be produced in London, then toured in the provinces, and the whole of the enormous (?) profits handed over to the Dramatic College at Woking. The first year, from the plays sent in for competition, one was adjudged worthy of the prize, and was accepted and produced. It was called, I think, *True to the Core*. It was afterwards sent on tour with very moderate results. The next year no play was offered that was deemed worthy of acceptance. The skilled playwrights declined to write an important drama for the sum of a hundred pounds only, and I fancy

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

that the third year also produced the same barren result.

In the meantime great dissatisfaction was beginning to arise—not only from the pensioners, but also from the subscribers—and many subscriptions were withdrawn. Rumours filled the air of misappropriation of the funds. The clothing of the aged people grew more and more dilapidated. Jessie and Victoria Vokes made red flannel petticoats for the old ladies and took them down. That delightful actress, Mrs. Stirling, also went down with a large bag upon her arm containing half-pounds of tea, which she distributed amongst them.

The fund still went down, and the committee appealed to the Court of—Chancery, I think, for the possession of the large sum of invested money left by T. P. Cooke. They urged that it was undoubtedly left for the benefit of his brother and sister artists, that the method prescribed by him had proved to be utterly impracticable, etc., etc. They gained their suit—they obtained the money—and that too vanished—“into air, into thin air.”

Things went from bad to worse. As the old pensioners died, their places were not filled up, and, one by one, the little cottages were left empty. Then came the “last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history”—

The Benevolent Fund

the sale of the land and buildings. They realized so small a sum that it was chiefly absorbed by auction and other charges.

Exit the Dramatic College at Woking!

As a specimen of the way in which matters were conducted, I may mention that each year, in the balance sheet, was this item,—“To keeping the Grounds in order—£400!”

It took a long time to regain the confidence of the public and to formulate any fresh scheme, but after much patient waiting and earnest endeavour “The Actors’ Benevolent Fund” took shape, and became a thing accomplished, but on totally different lines to those of its predecessor. With this admirably administered charity, the names of the recipients are known only to the officials. They can live with their friends or relatives wherever they choose, and the managers of the London theatres grant them a free *entrée* whenever it is practicable, thus giving a little life and colour to their declining years. The Dramatic Fête (no longer held at the Crystal Palace) has also undergone considerable improvement.

We next endeavoured to arrange with Shepherd and Creswick for another season—with an increase of salary. But this was not listened to, and we decided not to return upon the old conditions. Fortunately, Nye Chart

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

came and offered me the lead at Brighton, which I accepted, and, after staying with me a few weeks there, C. C. had the good fortune to secure an engagement with John Knowles, proprietor of the Theatre Royal, Manchester, for the stage management and a share of the lead. So, for a time, we had to separate.

In the company at Brighton, I met again the charming companion of my girlish days at Southampton—Mary Seyton. She and her mother again lived near me. She was still playing walking ladies, and, it was evident, had made little progress in her profession. It was easily accounted for—her heart was not in it. She was writing a novel, and her theatrical work was a secondary consideration. I remember one night—when she was the Celia and I the Rosalind—that half her speeches were impromptu (though, somehow, she always managed to alight on the last three or four words correctly), and I exclaimed in tones of grieved remonstrance, “Oh, Mary, how you can go on for an important Shakespearean part, knowing as little as you do, I can’t imagine!” She only laughed and said, “My dear, I gave you all your cues!” which she certainly had, but she had arrived at them by a route which was far from Shakespearean.

Towards the end of the season I was again compelled to absent myself—and about the

I Meet Miss M. E. Braddon Again

time of its close my third little son, Louis, arrived. Knowing that my landlady was no adept in the culinary art, kind-hearted Mary often stepped across with something covered over in a breakfast-cup, and the remark, "Mamma has been making some good soup, and I feel sure you would like a little," or, "Mamma has stewed some sweetbreads for our supper, and we think a little will do you good."

I fancy this was Miss "Seyton's" last histrionic engagement. She soon after went to London, and it was not long after, that she fascinated the fiction-loving public with her powerful novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*.

And now I must write somewhat fully of my husband's experiences at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, for this was the commencement of our twelve years' connection with the City of Cotton.

The Theatre Royal, Manchester, was then a power in that part of the land. No other theatre existed in the city except the "Queen's," which only produced melodrama, and which first-class stars never dreamed of visiting. John Knowles, therefore, ruled the theatrical world there with a despotic hand. If stars would not accede to his terms (which were often arbitrary ones), then Manchester's stage door was shut against them. When Dion

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Boucicault (the father of Chas. Frohman's talented "producer") had made an immense success in London with his drama of *The Colleen Bawn*, he was anxious to take it to Manchester, where he knew an enormous welcome was awaiting it. Knowles knew it too, and asked such prohibitive terms that Boucicault flatly refused them, and, defying precedent, carried his great London success to the "Queen's," where it had a brilliant run. All classes, from the highest to the lowest, crowded the theatre nightly, greatly to the detriment of the superior dramatic temple.

It can be easily understood that amongst the better class of theatre-goers there was arising the feeling that theatrical competition would be a good thing for Manchester, not only for the sake of art generally, but—which perhaps appealed to them most—also as a matter of commercial speculation.

The season at the Theatre Royal was to begin with *Hamlet*: Hamlet—Mr. David Jones; *The Ghost*—Mr. Chas. Calvert. Mr. Knowles usually engaged two leading men who had to play alternately lead and seconds.

Now, Shakespearean plays in the provinces were generally "pitchforked" on the stage. Any scenery and any costumes sufficed. My husband was indulging in the hope that he would be able to reform that altogether, and

Inexpensive Shakespearean Revival

to give shape to some of his pet ideas. Upon interviewing Mr. Knowles on the subject, however, his ambitious hopes received a considerable check.

“No,” said Mr. Knowles, “I’m not going to spend any money on it. There’s lots of scenery in the cellar, and heaps of dresses in the wardrobe. Do whatever you like with them, but I shan’t buy anything more. They’ve done before, and they must do again.”

So the contents of the cellar, scene dock, and wardrobe were turned out for the new stage manager’s inspection. There was, fortunately, a permanent scenic artist in the theatre, who entered into his projects *con amore*. By painting the lower portion of some Norman interiors with arras, covered with quaint designs, quite a different aspect was given to them. The churchyard scene was enclosed at the back, with a rising mound, down which the funeral procession wound slowly in the light of the setting sun.

From the wardrobe, all the old satin brocades and velvets that had previously been worn in the play for years were discarded, and an attempt made at Scandinavian costumes by selecting only serges, cloths, and clinging silks, the heavy woollen stockings being rolled over at the knees and cross-gartered—a thing not previously seen there. Music, too, was

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

freely used throughout the play—a startling innovation. Thus, without any expenditure, an effect was gained which caused the *Manchester Examiner and Times* to devote a whole column of praise to the “production.”

At this time Phelps had produced, at Sadler’s Wells, Tom Taylor’s play of *The Fool’s Revenge*, and Knowles said to the new stage manager, “I want you to go up to London to-morrow, and see *The Fool’s Revenge*. Make as many notes as you can, and jot down the colours and styles of the dresses, etc.”

This was done, and upon C.’s return and report, Knowles said in his brusque manner—“Well, that’s all right. Phelps is very fine, isn’t he?”

“Yes, very fine.”

“Fine part too, eh?”

“Ah, a magnificent part.”

“You’d like to play it, I suppose?”

“Of course I should.”

“Very well, you shall!”

At last the chance had come.

The part of Bertuccio is one that taxes the resources of an actor to their fullest extent. Every note in the gamut of emotional power is touched. Scorn—bitterness—parental love—tenderness—hatred—revenge—remorse—are all, in turn, delineated. My husband achieved a great success—the critics were

Henry Irving

enthusiastic. His letters to me (for I was still at Brighton) were exultant, but his intense acting injured his health, and at the end of the week he was ill in bed suffering from nervous exhaustion.

The following season he and I were both engaged by Knowles for lead, and in the meantime the scheme for another theatre was rapidly gaining ground. Mr. Calvert was confidentially informed that if it fructuated, he would be offered the management.

It was for this season at the Theatre Royal that a young man was engaged, for what is technically known as "walking gentlemen," whose name was Henry Irving. He was not, at first, a success. He had peculiarities of gait and speech, against which the representatives of the press launched all their powers of depreciation and sarcasm, frequently suggesting to Mr. Knowles how very easy it would be to engage a much more capable actor in his stead. But, as Griffith says of Wolsey, "he was a scholar, and a ripe and good one." He had refined thought, lofty ideals, and he and his stage manager were soon on friendly terms. They were kindred spirits. They took long walks together, and many a night did Irving accompany my husband home to share our bit of hot supper (which usually consisted of Irish stew). Sometimes the fire

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in our little parlour would have got low, when we would adjourn to the kitchen, where, with our feet upon the fender, we would diseuss Shakespeare, dramatic art and poetry, through the “wee sma’ hours ayont the twal’.”¹

A friend at this time mentioned to us a charming little French drama he had seen in Paris, the story of which was laid in England in the time of James the Second. It was called *Jarvis, L’Honnête Homme!* and he was sure that Jarvis was a part that would entirely suit my husband. We managed to procure a copy, and with the liberal use of a French dictionary, I succeeded in making an adaptation of it. I re-ehristened it *Ye Storye of an Englyshe Merchante*, which was printed on the bills in old English letters. It was produced at the Theatre Royal, and was

¹ In November of the same year, Edwin Booth came to the Theatre Royal as a star. He opened in *Hamlet*, with the following cast—

Hamlet	Mr. Edwin Booth.
Laertes	Mr. Henry Irving.
The Ghost	Mr. Chas. Calvert.
Polonius	Mr. Fred Everill.

This was followed by

The Merchant of Venice.

Shylock	Mr. Edwin Booth.
Bassanio	Mr. Henry Irving.
Portia	Mrs. Chas. Calvert.

Othello was played twice during the week, Mr. Booth and Mr. Calvert alternating *Othello* and *Iago*; and *Romeo and Juliet* was also performed, in which I played the Juliet to his impassioned and poetic Romeo.

The Lost Child

well received, although it was of too slight a character to achieve a lengthened run.

The following season neither of us was engaged by Knowles, and we fancied it might be from the fact that the scheme of the rival theatre had reached a stage of substantiality. A company had been formed, shares allotted, and the architects were sending in their designs.

My husband had several plays of his own and succeeded in filling up dates for them. I travelled with him the earlier part of the season, and then had to return to my little home in Manchester to await another domestic event.

It was while we were together in Glasgow that the following incident occurred. Our two eldest boys were sent to a neighbouring school, chiefly to keep them out of mischief, for they were still little more than babies. They took some lunch with them, and the nurse fetched them shortly before three o'clock, which was our dinner-hour. One day we returned home after a long and weary rehearsal, only to find the nurse with a troubled expression on her face. She said, "Please, sir, Willie has run away. He was in the playground at one o'clock, and they've not seen him since!" There was no dinner for my poor husband that day. For over three hours he scoured the city, visiting the police stations, and leaving descriptions of the missing lad.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

He returned at six to get some tea, and we had to leave for the theatre (which then commenced at seven o'clock), in a state of miserable anxiety. Upon our return at eleven-thirty, we learnt, to our great relief, that he had been found, and was safely asleep in bed. My landlady had happened to remember a police station down amongst the wharves, which she felt sure my husband had not visited. The good old soul had tramped her way down there, and was told that a boy had been found, and had been sent to an old woman close by, who took charge of all such young vagrants. There she found him, sitting in front of a good fire, with tea and buttered toast before him, and a huge cat upon his knee. His face fell when he saw that he was discovered. He knew that punishment was looming in the distance. My landlady had to pay a fine of 2s. 6d., and then carried him back in triumph; but, before she left, she said, "Why didn't he tell the policeman where he lived? He knew perfectly well." But Will had a vision of pains and penalties, and the following was what really occurred—

Policeman. What's your name, my lad?

No answer.

Policeman. Where do you live?

No answer.

‘Peep o’ Day’

Policeman. Does your father keep a shop ?

Will. No.

Policeman. Then what does he do ?

Will. He shaves and goes out.

As this wasn’t much of a clue, the policeman tried again.

Policeman. Does your mother keep a shop ?

Will. No.

Policeman. Then what does she do ?

Will. Slaps me when I’m naughty !

After this, I had an offer from Mr. Edmund Falconer to tour with his drama, *Peep o’ Day*, which had achieved a great success during the London season—a success only second to Boucicault’s *Colleen Bawn*. I accepted, and left home for Sheffield, where we commenced—taking my eldest little boy with me for company. It was there that, on awaking one morning, I found that he had slipped out of bed, and drawn up the blind to its fullest extent. A ladder was in front of the window, on which a bricklayer was going up and down to repair the roof. Lennie was watching him with wide-open eyes, and exclaimed in tones of awe, “Look, Mamma, there’s a man going up into the sun.”

The public did not respond greatly to *Peep o’ Day*, and at the end of four weeks the tour came to an end.

CHAPTER IV

OPENING OF THE PRINCE'S THEATRE, MANCHESTER

BEFORE the new theatre in Manchester had begun to take palpable shape in the form of bricks and mortar, doubts began to arise in the minds of the small body of speculators who held the shares. All the capital raised was, I believe, £18,000. When they came to go into the question of not only building a theatre, but also stocking it, an amount of perturbation set in, which is called, I believe, in scholastic circles "a blue funk." They resolved to compress their ambitious ideas. And so the theatre was to be small, the company small, the plays small. Triple bills, light comedies, burlesques, etc.

The reducing system was also rigorously applied to the salary which they offered their prospective manager, a sum utterly disproportionate to the arduous duties and tremendous responsibilities he would have to undertake. There was certainly attached to the proposed remuneration a share of the profits—I think it was a fourth. This, however, they

Initial Difficulties

imagined, with prophetic eye, would also be small, and with their policy, it would doubtless have been so. I remember the indignation with which I read their letter containing the offer, and how, upon the impulse of the moment, I begged my husband to refuse point-blank. After all their high-sounding promises, and nearly two years of suspense and expectation, it had resolved itself into this. However, some modifications were made and the contract signed for three years.

Then came the question of the opening play. It need scarcely be said that Mr. Calvert urged Shakespeare.

“Quite impossible,” was the reply. “Shakespeare requires a large company, quantities of expensive dresses, scenery, armour, etc. It can’t be done, Calvert.”

This was terribly disappointing, but my husband took a day or two to think it over, and then approached them again. “Look here,” he said, “I can produce *The Tempest* with a small company. The scenery is merely landscape and seascape, all thoroughly useful for other plays,—only five or six of the nobles’ dresses need be costly, and no armour is required. I propose also to use Arthur Sullivan’s music, which has never yet been heard in Manchester, and which would be a great feature.”

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

This was agreed to, and after some more discussion as to what was to follow (for the playgoer then expected a great deal more for his money, and an entertainment consisting of one play only was practically unknown), a burlesque entitled *Mazourka* was decided upon. It was short, only occupying an hour, and was then, I believe, running at the Gaiety Theatre in London.

Engagements were then made. The next step was that we had to wait until some portion of the building was ready for occupation. At last the room which was to be the wardrobe was available, and some eighteen or twenty women, headed by a tailor and his wife (who came with good references from the Theatre Royal, Newcastle-on-Tyne), started upon the costumes, everything having to be made in the theatre from motives of economy.

Some two or three weeks after, I was startled one afternoon by a man from the theatre arriving with a message from my husband—Would I please go down at once? I went—to find that our tailor had been apprehended by the police on a charge of theft, and carried back to Newcastle-on-Tyne, his poor wife electing to go with him. There being no one left to control the workwomen, I had to assume the reins, and become wardrobe mistress.

The Opening Night

Fortunately, the men's dresses were well in hand, and those of the women gave me little trouble.

At last, with rehearsals night and day, and almost superhuman exertions, came the 15th of October, 1864, and with it the opening of the Prince's Theatre, the bill of which is shown on page 71. The opening address, written by Mr. H. M. Acton and spoken by Mr. Calvert, was as follows—

“ Here we aspire, you aiding us, to lend
The Art we live for to its worthiest end;
To bid the grand old Masters of our Craft
Speak as though still they lived; abroad to waft
The words of wisdom, charity and wit,
Which Shakespeare, Sheridan, and Goldsmith writ;
Nor yet neglect whate'er the modern age
And living talent yield to grace the stage.
So may we hope the generous mind to reach
With sweetened lore, and pleasing, still to teach;
Alike at Virtue's, and the Muse's call
To bid the alternate passions rise and fall;—
The mirth that asks from modesty no blush;
Tears that from Nature's kindest fountains gush;—
And deeper grave those lessons on the mind,
Which, while they charm, instruct and warn mankind.
A great ambition: but, if you assist,
Hard though our toil, its aim will not be miss'd;
And think: if, haply, in some future year,
Children of yours seek chastened pleasure here,
How just the pride, if honour then be due,
To feel no trifling share belongs to you:
Yours, generous patrons, were the eyes to mark
When from the shore first crept our modest bark;

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

You saw its form and deemed its promise good;
You helped its trembling passage to the flood,
And sped it, bounding, in a worthy cause,
Before the favouring gale of your applause."

Amongst the successes of the night, I think the greatest was the Ariel of Julia St. George. This lady had been at the Lyceum Theatre, London, for several seasons with Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris. She possessed a beautiful voice and finished execution. When she found that Sullivan's music was to be used, she pleaded with great earnestness that she might retain Dr. Arnold's and Purcell's setting of Ariel's songs—knowing what she could do with the old music and fearing to attack the new. She gained her point, and her singing of "Where the Bee sucks" was the success of the evening. Her costume (which she designed herself, and brought with her) was of the palest blue silk, of that softness which is now termed "Liberty's," but was then called "Persian." Her legs and feet had toed stockings which simulated bareness. She also had white wings of real feathers (then a novelty), and elfish curling golden locks rippled over her shoulders and down her back, some of them reaching even to her knees. From out this wealth of golden hair shone her piercing black eyes, and when—whilst singing "Merrily, merrily shall I live now"—she

THE PRINCE'S THEATRE,

PROPRIETORS

Oxford Street, Manchester.
THE MANCHESTER PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENTS COMPANY LIMITED

Under the Direction of Mr. CHARLES CALVERT.

ON THE OPENING NIGHT,
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15,

In consequence of the introduction of the ANTHEM and ADDRESS, the Doors will open at Six, and the Performance commence at Half-past Six precisely.

THE PERFORMANCES WILL COMMENCE WITH
THE NATIONAL ANTHEM,
BY THE COMPANY.
After which Mr. CHARLES CALVERT will deliver an
OPENING ADDRESS,

By special authority of the Government by
H. M. ACTON, Esq.
To be followed by "Magazine's"

TEMPEST!

With the exception of Purcell's and Dr. Arno's Songs, the Music will be that composed by Mr. A. B. SALLINA.

Prospero	Antonia	(The rightful Duke of Milan)	Mr. CHARLES CALVERT
Alonso	Sebastian	(His Brother, the usurping Duke of Milan)	Mr. FIELDS DAY
Ferdinand	Guastello	(King of Naples)	Mr. WAINWRIGHT
Abrus	Francisco	(His Brother)	Mr. HOLMAN
Caliban	Tranio	(Son to the King of Naples)	Mr. H. B. HAYTHE
Stephano	Miranda	(An honest old member of Naples)	Mr. ELLYAK
Miranda	Ariel	(A sorcerer and deformed slave)	Mr. BARRICK
		(In various attitudes)	Mr. RUSSELL
		(Daughter to Prospero)	Mr. J. L. CATBURG
		(An airy spirit)	Mr. WUDGETTE
		(Who is expressly engaged for this dramatic)	Mr. EDWIN DIXON
			Mr. MARKHAM
			Mr. CHARLES CALVERT.
			Miss JULIA St. GEORGE

Act I—A SHIPWRECK AT SEA	THE ENCHANTED ISLAND	Grave	Holding
Act II—A DESERT PART OF THE ISLAND	Act III—A WOODED PART OF THE ISLAND		Grave
Act IV—THE CAVE OF PROSPERO	Act V—THE CAVE OF PROSPERO	Holding	Grave
VIEW OF ELLUSIS AND ITS TEMPLE	A SHIP IN A CALM	Holding	Holding

PROGRAMME OF THE MUSIC.

Overture	"La Tempete"	A Storm
Selections	"Le Tranoie"	Ford.
Overture	"Die heilige Waise"	Proved.
Quadrille	"The Act"	Wallerstein
Waltz	"Believe and Waver"	Stevens

To conclude with the New Burlesque, by H. J. BYRON, Esq., altered and revised by him expressly for this Theatre, entitled

MAZOURKA

Or, the Stick, the Pole, and the Tartar.

The Countess Tiddelwick	(the Count's better and bigger half, a strong-minded, strong willed, and strong-headed lady of a certain (or supposed) age, who liberally strikes everybody else across the nose)	Mr. FREDERICK MACCANE.
Mazurka	(the Basket maker's Wife, a pretty Polish Providence, who is being constantly snogged on the cheek by her husband)	Miss FLORENCE HAYDN
Taira	Huntresses, Villagers, and the usual routine profession to Superheroes, &c. (Deposited to Irish, too lucky dog)	Miss MARY TOWNLEY.
Count Tiddelwick	(a great Pole of large Property)	Miss EDITH CHALLIS
Barns Bank	(the Valet, which is not staying much for his worth)	Miss HAMMERTON.
A Blind Fiddler	(who comes to every village and to villages 10)	Mr. HUDSPETH.
M. Frocodile	(Professor of Dancing, Deportment, and Calisthenics)	Mr. EDWIN DIXON
Mazurki	(a Butler and Mat-maker, who, though he rubs it in his business, is more of a Pole than a Bash-an, head of his W's, but dressed to the hilt)	Mr. PHILIP DAY.
		Miss ALICE DODD

EXTERIOR OF THE COUNTS, AND THE BASKET MAKING Holding
A LANDSCAPE Mr. GRIFFIN, JAMES
THE BOUDOIR OF THE COUNTESS Holding
MAZOURKA'S DWELLING Buckley

Musical Director - Mr. FERDINAND WALLERSTEIN.
The NEW ACT DROP by Mr. WILLIAM BEVERLEY.

Master Carpenter, Mr. DRUMMOND; Property Master, M. D. FURVIS; Ballet Master, Miss ELLISON
Treasurer Mr. H. COCKE, to whom all applications regarding bills and advertisements must be addressed
Prices of Advertisements: Orchestra Seats (Reservable) 4s; Lower Circle (Reservable) 3s; Amphitheatre Seats (Reservable) 2s; Pit, 1s; Gallery, 6d. Private Boxes, £1 1s and £2 2s. No Half-price to any part of the house
Gallery seats are in the rear of the Theatre in Side Street. Children to not be admitted to any part of the house. No Money returned
Pay-out Checks not Transferrable. Box Office open daily from Eleven till Two.

IRLAND & CO., PRINTERS, FALMOUTH, COURT, MANCHESTER.

PLAYBILL OF THE OPENING NIGHT OF THE PRINCE'S THEATRE.

The Prince Consort

tripped from one side of the stage to the other, her arms waving exultingly over her head, she seemed the very embodiment of elfish joy. The song was re-demanded, and again re-demanded, and not until she had sung it for the third time was the play allowed to proceed.

It will be noticed that three of the scenes were by the London artist, W. Grieve, whose name was a hall-mark for excellence and beauty. These scenes were looked upon by the committee as something of an extravagance, but my husband urged strongly that, as they were to be stock scenery for possibly three or four years, they would well repay the outlay. Mr. Grieve afterwards painted for nearly the whole of the Shakespearean productions at the "Prince's." He usually came to Manchester to superintend the setting of his scenes, and on such an occasion would be our guest. He narrated to us once a most interesting incident which had happened some years previously, which I will give in his own words, as nearly as I can remember them :

"I was startled one day by an important-looking despatch, brought by an official, which informed me that the Prince Consort wished to see me as soon as possible. I went, and was conducted to his Royal Highness in his library. He said, 'Oh, Mr. Grieve, I am in a

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

bit of a difficulty. You know we are building a place up at Balmoral, and the architect does not seem to grasp entirely what it is that I want. Now I want a large ancient-looking hall, where we can give all the gillies, servants, and tenants a dance.' And the Prince went on to describe the minstrels' gallery and other details, by which I realized that he had in his mind the Banqueting Scene in Macbeth's castle, which I had done for Charles Kean at the 'Princess's.' A day or two later, I waited again upon the Prince, with water-colour sketches. He seemed delighted, and said, 'The very thing, Mr. Grieve, the very thing! And now I want you to go up to Balmoral, and stay there till it is well in hand. Take your wife and family with you. There are some houses on the estate. One shall be fitted up for you, you will be informed when it is ready.' So we went up to Balmoral, found that everything for our comfort had been thought of; even a carriage and pair of horses placed at our disposal. We had some glorious drives, stayed there all the summer, and altogether it was the most delightful time that I have ever experienced."

After that, whenever I used to read of the Highland dances given by Queen Victoria to her dependants, I always thought of the Royal Baronial Hall, where they took place, and of

First Pantomime at the Prince's

its having been built from the designs of a theatrical scenic artist.

Of all the persons whose names are in the bill of that opening night, only one beside myself is now living, Miss Florence Haydon (she has since added the "o" to her name), whose clever delineations of old women are still a feature in many a London play.

When *The Tempest* was withdrawn at the end of November (on account of preparation for the Christmas production), Mr. J. L. Toole, who was a shareholder in the theatre, came for a couple of weeks, and, as he supervised his own productions, it left my husband free to direct all his energies to the pantomime. So he and I took a flying visit to London, to see what could be bought up at a reasonable price in the way of scenery, costumes, and properties that would be available. Economy was still the order of the day. We visited, amongst other places, the Alhambra, in Leicester Square. It was the last night of some ballet or extravaganza in which there was a scene representing foliage and rocks, down which came a cascade of real water. My husband purchased the whole scene complete (*minus* the water) for the sum of £10, and it proved a very attractive feature in the pantomime. The pantomime was *Mother Goose*, and one of the hits in it was made by a diminutive lad

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who impersonated the Goose. He was really twelve, but looked about seven, and afterwards became a very successful jockey.

The task of producing a pantomime in about five weeks was a tremendous fight against time. It meant night and day work. I vividly remember one occasion when, after a long and wearying night rehearsal, my husband and I left the theatre, and found that it was day-break. As our cab drove up the Oxford Road that cold December morning, we saw the mills lighted up and heard the factory bells summoning the workers. We saw hurrying along—men, women, young lads, young girls, and numbers of children who, having reached the legalized age of nine, were qualified for factory work.

My imagination went back to those bad old days when little mites of six and seven could be taken from their beds at daybreak and dragged through the wintry streets to take their places in the coal-mines and at the looms. Small wonder that they paid the penalty in stunted bodies, crippled limbs, and early deaths. It was this that drew from Mrs. Barrett Browning that piteous appeal: "*Do ye hear the Children weeping, O my Brother?*"

“ For all day we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark underground,
And all day we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories round and round.”

Little White Slaves of England

From a work entitled *The Industrial History of England*, by H. de B. Gibbins, M.A., I cite the following: After relating numerous horrors, he says, "The factory hands in general, and the children in particular, at length found help in a few philanthropists. Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, and Richard Gathorne must in special be mentioned as champions of the mill hands. Long after Lord Shaftesbury had succeeded in his noble work he spoke of the sights he had seen during his earlier labours in the factory districts. 'Well can I recollect,' he said, in a speech in the House of Lords in 1873, 'waiting at the factory gate to see the children come out, and a set of sad, dejected, cadaverous creatures they were. In Bradford especially the proofs of long and cruel toil were most remarkable—the crippled and distorted forms might well be numbered by hundreds, perhaps by thousands. A friend of mine collected a vast number together for me. The sight was most piteous, the deformities incredible. They seemed to me like a mass of crooked alphabets.' "

In 1831 an act was passed *limiting* the hours of labour for persons under eighteen to twelve hours a day—and nine hours on Saturdays.

And in 1874 the minimum age at which

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a child could be admitted to a factory was fixed at ten years.

The stage door and the gallery entrance of the "Prince's" were almost side by side, in a narrow thoroughfare at the back of the theatre, called Bale Street. The dressing-room which my husband and I had to occupy jointly was also his office in the day, for space was limited), and its window looked out upon the gallery entrance, from which we could see the crowd waiting for the doors to open.

England had not then borrowed from her Gallie cousins the sensible and orderly queue, and there they stood—a seething, restless mob, sometimes drenched with the pitiless rain, hail, or snow. Permission was asked of the civic authorities that a verandah might be built round the back of the theatre—the same as in front—but the request was refused. The opposite side of the narrow street was occupied by warehouses, from which lorries were loaded to such an extent that when the long, awkward vehicles had to turn, the bales of cotton often projected over the pavement. The footpath on each side, therefore, had to be kept clear of all obstacles—hence the refusal.

My husband then appealed to the committee of the theatre. "Why not open the gallery door early in the afternoon, and let the people

The Early Door

go in as they arrived ? ” He also advocated the sale of newspapers and cheap novels in the theatre, for those who had to wait. The committee agreed to consider the matter, but, after some delay, the answer came, that as the money-takers and check-takers would have to attend earlier, they would expect increased remuneration, and as the scheme would also involve an extra consumption of gas, they could not agree to its adoption. My husband then suggested—in order to meet that expense,—“ Well, let us try the experiment of an extra sixpence for those who wish to go in early. I dare say the most of those who can afford it will not grudge the extra charge, as they will have the choice of the best seats—and warmth, and light, and comfort.”

This was agreed to. The experiment was tried, and caught on. By degrees, other theatres adopted the idea, and the custom of “ Early Doors ” has since been followed by nearly every provincial theatre in Great Britain.

I cannot now remember what else was played that first season, but I know that at the end of it my husband’s share of the profits amounted to £400—which was not inconsiderable from a small theatre where the highest price for admission was only four shillings. The second season began with *A Midsummer*

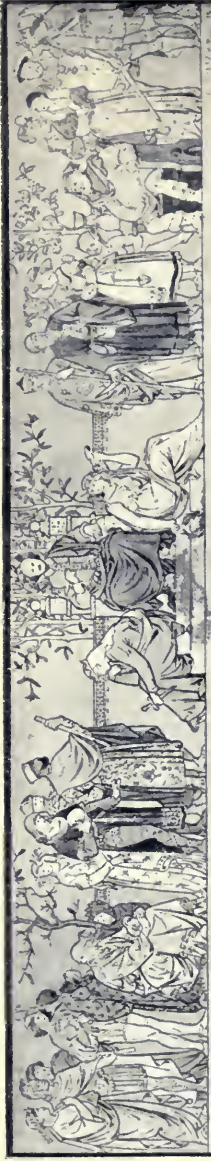
Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Night's Dream, in which neither he nor I played. It was produced upon too cheap a scale and was not a success.

After the pantomime the theatre was closed for alterations, and I will now cite from the book *An Architect's Experiences*, by Alfred Darbyshire, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., who was, for so many years, our dear and devoted friend :

“As time went on, the policy pursued by Calvert became so popular, that the little Prince's Theatre was found inadequate to accommodate the increasing audiences. It was accordingly determined by the directorate that the house should be enlarged. I was called in to devise a scheme by which the house should be stretched to its utmost capacity; thus commenced my professional association with the architecture of the theatre.

“I was instructed to provide an additional circle without raising the roof, and to construct a new proscenium. I was allowed *carte blanche* in the decoration; but the scheme was to be in accordance with the Shakespearean idea of the management. I induced H. Stacy Marks, R.A., to paint a proscenium frieze, the subject being Shakespeare enthroned between Tragedy and Comedy, and attended on either side by representative figures from the principal plays. This picture is one of the finest decorative



DESIGN FOR FRIEZE PRINCE'S THEATRE MANCHESTER from *H. Stacy Marks*

FRIEZE DESIGN, BY H. STACY MARKS, R.A.

The Second and Third Seasons

paintings of our time, and retains its beauty and freshness to the present day.”

The theatre reopened on August 6, 1865, with *Much Ado About Nothing*, in which my husband was the Benedick, and I the Beatrice. The following season *Antony and Cleopatra* was the production, and by this time the directors were “of a more coming-on disposition,” and sanctioned the expenditure of quite a large sum of money. My husband went over to Paris to purchase the armour and regalia, etc., from the celebrated firm of Le Blanc Grainger. The play had not been produced for a great many years—not even the oldest playgoer in Manchester had ever seen it. It was a revelation.

Tom Taylor (who was then a stranger to us) addressed a long letter of praise to the *Manchester Guardian*, the concluding words of which Mr. Darbyshire has quoted in his book, and are as follows: “Feeling grateful to Mr. Calvert for the pleasure he has given me, I feel it a reflected credit for Manchester that it should be made the scene of such a theatrical venture. . . . I can only wish that we had in the Metropolis more of the spirit which, judging by this revival, does not despair of recognition and reward in this great seat of manufacturing industry.”

The following letter from Sir Theodore

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Martin was accompanied by a volume of his translation of the *Vita Nuovo* :

Manchester,
Wellecomb Street,
November 1, 1866.

DEAR SIR,

Allow me to offer you the accompanying Copy of the only one of my books which I have with me, as a Memorial of the very great pleasure which your representation of the *Antony and Cleopatra* gave me. I had never hoped to see the play on the stage, much less to see it in a form so complete and so suggestive. Your task was one of gigantic difficulty, and my only regret is, that you had not a wider sphere than even Manchester to show how much knowledge and taste you have brought to its fulfilment. Believe me, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

THEODORE MARTIN.

CHARLES CALVERT, ESQ.

With *Antony and Cleopatra* my husband's three years' agreement came to an end, and he resolved not to renew it, except upon very different conditions. Although some of the directorate were cultured and artistic men, there were others who possessed neither of these qualities.

Mr. Darbyshire, in his book, from which I have already quoted, cites an instance where

We Leave Manchester

one of the august body, after seeing a dress rehearsal of a Shakespearean play, called out loudly, "This is the best thing you've given us yet, Calvert. Who wrote it?"

And the same gentleman, having witnessed *Antony and Cleopatra*, said, "I don't think I care much for this play, Calvert. I prefer plays where we know the people really lived, like *Richard III*, and *Henry VIII*."

My husband said quietly, "Well, but these people have really lived."

"Oh, have they?"

"Yes. Almost everything that happens in the play has really taken place. You can read it all in Plutarch's *Lives*."

"Whose?"

"Plutarch's *Lives*."

"Where do you get them?"

This sort of thing was not particularly annoying, because it had its humorous side, but there was no humour (at least, not to a sensitive, highly strung nature like my husband's) when the accounts were gone into, and each item discussed in his presence.

"Look here, Calvert. Three bolts of canvas on the 21st of August, and two more bolts of canvas on the 29th. What was all that for?"
—"Forty pounds of paint! That seems a lot!"

These pin-pricks of annoyances—like the drops of water in the Inquisition torture—grew,

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by frequent repetition, to be almost unbearable. My husband had, too, the conviction that he was very much underpaid, and this was coupled with the strong desire to be once again his own master, free from the pounds and pence supervision; and so, after much deliberation, the separation took place. I fancy that some of the directors were rather glad. They saw a chance of carrying on the theatre in a way more in unison with their own tastes. Shakespeare was, to them, a bore. They would infinitely have preferred *The Girl who fell down the Back Stairs*, or something of that edifying class of entertainment. At all events they accepted my husband's resignation without much protest.

A benefit was tendered to us at the Free Trade Hall, with a committee of almost every influential name in Manchester, and, after it, we moved, with all our worldly goods, to London. We took a house near the Regent's Park, where, in the following November, my youngest daughter was born—whilst my husband had numerous offers of short engagements from various managers.

CHAPTER V

OUR RETURN TO MANCHESTER

THE Prince's Theatre was then for some time carried on under a policy which may have been popular, but which was certainly unprofitable, as at the end of their first season, they were unable to declare any dividend at all—the first time this unpleasant event had occurred.

Then there arose a desire to return to the old régime, and overtures were made for my husband to resume the reins of management, upon a much more equitable and comfortable basis. The contract was signed, and then came again the question of removal.

The committee were anxious that he should return to them as quickly as possible. They had completed several negotiations, which had, of course, to be carried out, and no Shakespearean revival was needed for some time to come, but they wished him to play the principal part in *No Thoroughfare*, which was to be their next production. It was having a successful run in London at the "Adelphi," where Fechter played the leading personage. He therefore decided that he would return to Manchester

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alone, and after the production of the play, as soon as it was working smoothly, and he had a little leisure, he would be able to look about for a suitable house for our next home.

No Thoroughfare was produced. He had a most enthusiastic reception, and the Press were unanimous in their welcome and their praise. But the excitement of meeting again with his old friends—the extra work the production of the play had entailed, together with the study and performance of a long and arduous part, brought on one of his attacks of nervous prostration, and one day I received the sad news that he had broken down the previous evening, and was ordered by his medical adviser several days of complete rest, and, if possible, to leave Manchester for the sea coast.

So a small furnished house was taken at Southport. A kind friend of ours, who was a furniture dealer in Manchester, came to London, assisted me to pack such necessaries as were needed for the Southport house, and saw me and the children off at the station. Our three boys were at school, but I had two little daughters with me, and my baby, only a few months old. Our friend remained in the house after we had left, and saw the whole of the furniture packed and sent off to Manchester.

An Anxious Time

I reached Southport and then came weeks of anxiety. The patient benefited greatly by the rest, and the lovely mild breezes of the pretty watering-place, but on the slightest feeling of convalescence, he would start up, and, in spite of my entreaties, dress himself and rush to the station to take the next train to Manchester, returning to me hours later, thoroughly exhausted. I remember our doctor saying to him, "Really, Mr. Calvert, you are the most trying patient I have ever had. I left you this morning so much better, with your pulse almost normal, and here you are with a temperature of 103 again." I felt that something must be done, and so, unknown to him, I sat down and wrote to the directors, imploring them to forbid his coming to the theatre, asking them not to send the nightly returns, which constantly upset him (for the business had gone down, and they were losing), and to let him remain in ignorance of everything connected with the theatre for some days at least.

The plan succeeded. When no letter came, he simply said, "Oh, well, I suppose they're doing it out of kindness," and troubled no more about it. I encouraged him to read fiction, of which he was never very fond, as his taste was for more abstruse literature. I got him George Eliot's and Miss Mulock's works, and

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we used to discuss them, carefully avoiding any reference to things theatrical. Each day he grew calmer and stronger, until there came a time when we were able to go over to Manchester together and look out for a house.

We found one, just off Heald Grove, semi-detached, with quite a good garden, and fields—absolutely fields—facing our front door. Innumerable small cottages fill the space now. In a few weeks we were duly installed there. Our boys came back from their school near London, and were placed at that of Dr. Adams in Victoria Park.

Then came the selection of the next Shakespearean production. After some cogitation, I was glad to find that he had decided on *The Winter's Tale*, as the part of Leontes was not at all arduous or exacting.

The following year *Richard the Third* was produced, in which my husband, of course, was the Richard, and I the Elizabeth of York, and it was the first time in Manchester that it had been played from the text; Colley Cibber's version having always been preferred by the star actor. The play cost £4,000 to mount, and after a brilliant run, was sold to Messrs. Jarrett and Palmer of New York for half that sum.

My husband had a great desire to play the



MR. CHARLES CALVERT AS RICHARD III.

‘Timon of Athens’

part of Timon in *Timon of Athens*, but felt that the play was not strong enough to constitute what is termed a revival. After the pantomime, therefore, in 1870, when there was a vacancy of some four or five weeks, he produced the play compressed into three acts. The women's parts were eliminated on account of their objectionable nature, and the play dealt only with Timon and his false friends. Scarcely any money was spent upon it. The scenery and dresses of *The Winter's Tale* were utilized. There was a numerous ballet and chorus. Dances and choruses at Timon's feast were made a feature. My husband was very anxious about the scene in which Timon flings the empty plates and dishes at his treacherous friends, which concluded the second act, fearing that the audience might laugh; but, when that point was reached, the excitement was enormous, and the curtain had to be raised again and again. The death of Timon, which occupied the whole of the last act, was most impressive, and was declared by the critics to be second only to that of Lear.

It was during the run of this play that two of the supernumeraries had some words in their dressing-room, which resulted in blows, and a man named Owen struck his opponent, True-man, with a life-preserver. The two men were quickly expelled, but a day or two after

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my husband received this extraordinary letter from Owen, which is given here, verbatim—

39, Chester Street,

C.-on-M.

April 9, 1871.

SIR,

When you take this letter and read it, You will perhaps be angry for me writing it to you. Heaven help me, It is the agony of my soul that compels me to send it. You may, I know, think me a villian and perhaps a Murderer. But no I am neither : If you could only see the cleanliness and order in which I keep my Books and other Material with which I ONCE, DID pass my time, you would say this is no villian's (or murderer's) room, I have a place for Everything even for writing and drawing paper, But enough of this. What I want to tell you, Sir, is this.

That having been about ten Months in your service, And during that time behaved myself. And won the Confidence of those around me. And having resisted the Temptation of Idleness (by doing light work through the day with my Uncle, such as Sign-Writing painting, etc. : which I can do) I should be fallen so low, as to be expelled in disgrace from the Theatre.

Oh, Heavens, Who can tell the agony of my very Soul, when I was told to depart from the only place, wherein I had known any happi-



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS ELIZABETH OF YORK.

A "Super's" Letter

ness; For my life has never been aught but disappointment to me so much so, that I am quite resigned for anything, even for Death, which I have prayed for. Both before and after leaving the Theatre, Sir: I will tell you how I so far forgot myself as to strike the man, who hit me:—

It is God's Truth what I tell you Sir, As I am not given to Lies at the best of times. Having always placed Reliance in Him, Who Rules even you Sir; And may even bring you to account for the Miseries which you may bring on me, if, You refuse to accept my Humbly proffered services:

Before I entered the Theatre at all. I bought a Life preserver (curse it for ever). But what I bought it for I'm sure I don't know, However when my Mother saw it, she hid it from me. Not because she was afraid I'de do any harm, But because I had spent my money on a thing I did not want. In the meantime I had got engaged at the Theatre, I never found it till that unlucky evening, when looking under the Fire-Place upstairs, I found the thing. I brought it to the Theatre thinking that I might Raffle it, As we had a box and dice there (Vain Thought). As I was going into the Theatre I seen a Young Man, I hadn't seen for a long Time, I was quite delighted at meeting him and (jokingly) I told him I'de be out in a Jiffey

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

after I'de played my part. (Which alas, proved too true for I had indeed played my part, and a deep one too) I went in, and down to the Super's Room, and after passing the Compliments of the Evening. I proceeded to dress, after which I and 2 or 3 more amused ourselves with a Flute one of them had brought. How happy we WERE THEN, Trueman and me were arguing on Drink. There was a Lad of the name of Wood; who had got a place at an hair cutters And he saying he was Teetotal. I said, so he ought to be. Now Trueman having once put his Clothes on my nail, and me having told Mr. Pedley of him, he still persisting in keeping them there, must have kept the spite in for me. (or perhaps it was because he had a drop. Which has proved a Death Drop too many for some people) He said what d——d foolishness of a lad like him signing the Pledge. I replied by saying: What would it look like for to see a lad like him drunk in the Streets, Trueman replied: What d—— foolish talk. I wouldn't mind speaking to you BUT your so —— Crazy. At that I fired up in an instant, and said your —— insulting. He said what's that say it again. I says no thank you. He says I'll knock your —— head off. I says will you ther'el be two at that game; He says take that then (turning

A "Super's" Letter

round and hitting me in the neck which near upset me, and made a lump there which happily has near left me). As soon as I recovered myself I hit him with, the — preserver. it did not hurt him, I can swear, for though in a rage I could feel the largest end in my hand. and I know that I did not strike him hard. Else if I had not struck him; there was plenty would have took my part. Or I could have told Mr. Pedley and got him sent away. But NO, I thought in an instance that if I told of him, he'd be sent away and I'd be called a tell-tale. He turned round when I struck him and knocked me down and thumped and kicked me shamefully till the others stopt him You will see the rest on page 2nd.

My Makeup was spoiled I was late for the scene and lost my hat. Notwithstanding all this I pulled through the scene, as Herald, and in a few minutes after was told to leave the Theatre, I was dumbfounded when I was told. I dressed myself and left the place I saw my friend outside, I told him all and he said where will you go to now. To France I says I was out of work next week. But I had a week's wages saved up so I gave it to my Mother. For I was ashamed to tell her, till compelled by necessity, I have since tried to get back meself and Truman by asking Mr. Pedley and I would gladly

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

have given him 2s. 6d. for getting me back along with Trueman. But no it was no use. I have a Mother and Sister, to keep (and so has many more you would say) But never mind. I have lived on a cup of coffee minus sugar many a time, and bread without butter sometimes, While a herring would be a great luxury. Nothing prospers with me but at The Theatre. I have laid my Mind to the Theatre and I really think I was born for the Stage. Sir if you take me back once again I will give a Week's Wage in advance as Security for my Temper. To BE forfeited if I strike anyone even if they strike me the money if forfeited to be given half to the person struck the rest to the supers,

Your's Most Humble Servant

FRANCIS OWEN.

The result of this noteworthy epistle was that the two men were reinstated.

When the run of *Timon of Athens* had come to an end, my husband left for Venice (at the suggestion of the directors, who generously paid all his expenses), to obtain material for the forthcoming production of *The Merchant of Venice*.

He travelled via Switzerland, and from Andermatt I received a characteristic letter from him describing his journey.

A Letter from Switzerland

Hotel St. Gothard,
Andermatt.

May 23, 1871.

Noon.

MY DEAR NELLY,

Here I am within 3 hours "diligence ride" of the Mont St. Gothard—yesterday at 1.30 I left Lucerne down the Lake past "Zello Chapel"—to "Fluellin" through "Altorf" etc., etc., by diligence and so on through the pass, arriving at this Hotel at 10.30 last night. I cannot describe what I have seen—to me it is simply indescribable, neither book, nor pictures have ever given me an adequate idea of the grandeur of this country—as Julian St. Pierre says, "It is the land of grandeur and of beauty." At one moment you cannot conceive the steeps of Heaven to be more beautiful—grandly wooded—every possible bit of land nicely cultivated, no appearance of want, all look tranquil and comfortable, the chalets and villages are wondrously quaint, primitive and uncommon—sometimes one finds oneself in an Amphitheatre so vast as to accommodate all the world in assembly, if they would stand close, and yet near enough to address them if the torrent would but be silent—as the sun left the valley, I saw some very curious effects of rays. They appeared fluted, if I had seen them in a picture, I should have pronounced them as being intentionally conventional.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

As we got nearer the snow the cold grew rather sharp, and I had (riding outside) to fortify myself with another coat; then the sun gradually left the snow peaks, now yellow, now pale rose, now pale, very pale, blue—then the stars one by one large and bright—darker and darker, till the aspect is awfully sombre, awe-inspiring and profound. Sometimes we travel round a huge rock sheerly straight from top to bottom—the abyss below and the height above fearful to look at—the moon was only crescent, so our light was chiefly starlight, and the lamps of the diligence highly necessary, without them it would have been impossible to proceed. Passing through “Amsteg” the quaintest place I ever saw, we emerged into a gorge reminding me of “The valley of the Shadow of Death”—the wind got loud, the torrent louder, the darkness deeper, and as the lamps of the vehicle lit up the huge boulders we laboured by so carefully I could easily fancy huge monsters, stony and staring, grim, comie, terrible; one rock looked like an enormous lion’s head with a snub nose and its tongue out in derision—another a monstrous death’s-head. I called the attention of the “conductor,” with whom I rode, to this, and he said it was called the devil’s head—a huge rock that had rolled completely down from the summit. He told me we should before long reach the devil’s

A Letter from Switzerland

bridge, and we did, and truly a devilish place it *is*, at night,—you find yourself on it within a monstrous mountain gorge of black steep rock (Doré does the sort of thing and not a bit exaggerated) and a boiling, seething, roaring, rushing torrent underneath you.

One can feel the air wet with the mist the spray produces and can see the white foam in large patches far below. (Here and here only I confess I felt a little overpowered.) It is so stately and mighty that one feels almost speechless in its presence. This morning I have been again to the spot but of course the *night* effect is another thing—in daylight one sees its extent and the eye grows somewhat familiar, but it is, and always must be, a wonder. At 4 o'clock this afternoon I shall be on the top of the St. Gothard—snow everywhere—the road cut through it—then begins the descent into Italy—about which anon—

I get to Bellinzona to-night at 10—sleep—then the Lago Maggiore to “Arano” or may be by diligence—then to “Milan,” then “Venice”—then back another way—

God bless you all.

Yours,

CHARLES.

The weather here is delightful—snow here and there on the ground (drift snow) and a

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

bright warm sun—and the atmosphere dazzling clear. They tell me here I must wear blue spectacles crossing the snow when the sun is on it, it is bad for the sight, so I do so; I bought them ready in Lucerne.

My husband bore with him a letter of introduction from Mr. Tom Taylor to Mr. Rawdon Browne, the British Consul there, who entertained him with the most delightful hospitality.

Rawdon Browne was a much noted and highly popular man in Venice. He had been Consul for many years, and was so imbued with its traditions, that he was, in all but birth and office, a Venetian. At his table, his guests were waited upon by his gondoliers, clad in their picturesque costumes, with the monogram of their master embroidered upon their vests. He entered with much delight into all my husband's ideas regarding *The Merchant of Venice*, and, together, they searched old archives, whose time-stained pages gave them glimpses of the age "when Venice, throned in state, sat on her hundred isles." Even after my husband's return from Venice, Mr. Browne continued his researches, and sent the following letters—

The British Consul at Venice

Venice,
June 1, 1871.

DEAR MR. CALVERT,

In 1395 the Jews were forbidden to reside in Venice, though, at a later period, they obtained occasional licences, which, however, limited their stay in the Capital to one fortnight, and in 1395, the Grand Council first decreed that they were to wear a yellow circle (O), whereby to distinguish them from the Christians. The "O" "to be of the size of a loaf of bread of the value of four Venetian pence," so we may suppose the badge to have been a yellow circle, eight English inches in diameter. This law having been habitually transgressed by the Jews, the Council of Ten renewed it in 1434.

In 1496 the Jews having always contrived to conceal the yellow "O" on their breasts, by means of their cloaks (*manti*) or in other ways, the Senate, in the year 1496, to give them a more outward and visible mark, issued an order for all Jews in the Venetian territories to wear on their *heads*—at all seasons—a cap covered with yellow, which colour was afterwards changed to red; and this last law yet remained in force when Sandi's work was printed in 1756.

By dramatic licence, or by adhering strictly to the date of the "Pecorone," whose author is

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

said to have flourished in the 15th Century, Shylock's ordinary head-piece may be correctly exchanged for a yellow breast plate.

RAWDON BROWNE.

Casa della Vida,
Venice,
August 15. 1 p.m.

MY DEAR MR. CALVERT,

At 1 p.m. this day, I received the "Slips," and knowing the value of despatch, return them immediately, putting on this sheet the following remarks for your consideration.

Note 3. (1) Canaregio, not Grand Canal. Quay?

Note 4. Transect of the Campo S. Giacomo, not for the ferrying of passengers across the Canal, but a station for the hire of Gondolas.

Note 7. Facanon Palaece. Built in the 15th century by the Giustiniani family. At the fall of the Republic, it belonged to the Patriarch Giovannelli, and was afterwards sold to one "Facanon," a Sardinian corn dealer.

Note 4. (2) I do not believe that the original author of *The Merchant of Venice* had the Statue in his eye, when he gave Launcelot his surname—which is still common in Venice

Letters of Rawdon Browne

—and in the Venetian Territory; and, a quarter of a century ago, viz., on the 6th of January 1846, I read in the Venetian *Gazette*, amongst the deaths, that of “Angelo dei Gobbi, detto Roverso, di Domenico, Villico, d’anni 40,” which signifies “Angelo of the Gobbo family, alias Roverso, son of Domenico—a Clown.” You must admit that he was lineally descended from Launcelot.

Note 22. Near Sacile, in the Fruiti, are the two castles of Porzia and Brugnera, which yet belongs to the Counts of Porzia. The castle of Porzia is between Sacile and Pordenone, and the castle of Brugnera stands on the eastern bank of the Livenza; so, as in the case of “Gobbo,” we may suppose the name of the rich heiress to have been given correctly; and that that of her second castle was changed to Belmont, perhaps from regard for her family. Some years ago I was introduced to the Countess Porzia of the day—by birth, a

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Venetian Gentlewoman of the name of Yien, and I remember asking her about her castles, and the second week in Easter 1860, when on my way to Lido, I saw a dead body taken out of the sea, which proved to be that of a young Count of Porzia (some 20 years old) who was said to have drowned himself; all of which details I give to convince you that we have still Gobbos and Portias.

Johnson was "burning" when he talked of Portia's suitors, but the person meant was Arabella Stuart, who, when the piece first came out, and she was young and happy, thought it a good joke; but, in February 1610, being then in great distress, she complained of having been ridiculed by the Public Players—"about the negotiations with the Moldavian Prince"—and the comedy was prohibited.

My belief is that the "Scottish Lord," was a Douglas, and "Fauconbridge," the Earl of Northumberland, as seen by the

Rawdon Browne, British Consul

Domestic Calender, A.D. 1590, page 708. The Moldavian Prince was the brother or kinsman of the late Hospodar.

I have not received the book, but anticipate my thanks and request you by return of post to announce the receipt of the proofs (which accompany this letter); and with kindest regards to Mr. Taylor, and many thanks for his last kind letter, Believe me to be, dear Mr. Calvert,

Very sincerely yours,

RAWDON BROWNE.

Casa della Vida,
Venice.

August 18, 1871.

MY DEAR MR. CALVERT,

Your perseverance in representing Shakespeare's *Venice* to the letter delights me more and more, and in reply to this last inquiry, be it known that "The Foscari Gate," which is here called "Porta della Carta," still bears the Foscari arms on its external front, in the two niches on the third story; the dexter chief bearing the winged lion's head, and, on a line with the pedestals of two figures on the second story, are three marble brackets.

Thanks to a rare old print in St. Mark's Library, I am enabled to tell you that the three brackets supported the marble effigy of Doge

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Foscari in his Ducal habits, kneeling before St. Mark's lion; the group filling up what is now a vacant space between the summit of the architrave of the door, and the sill of the window; and, that you may be able to paint the scene correctly—as I think it will make a prodigious effect, (especially if you gild the Doge and his bonnet); and please your audience by letting them have a truer peep at *Old Venice*, in Manchester, than they could get on the spot, I therefore enclose a careful tracing made upon the print; and at your leisure you can return it to me.

The Venetian Communists of 1797, like their scoundrel French kinsfolk in 1871, preached and practised the destruction of all monumental records, especially such as had reference to the aristocracy of Venice and her government.

What became of the Lion, I know not, but, a worthy conservative Mason, one Spiera, whom I employed here, in his old age, some forty years ago, saved the Doge's head (a very striking portrait, evidently taken from life), and it is now in the Museum of St. Mark's Library.

I am flattered by your inquiries about my grubbings, and beg your acceptance of the Giustiniani letters, which shall be sent to you immediately. As for the Venetian Calendars,

More Letters

down to 1533, they may be consulted in any of the National Libraries which receive copies from Her Majesty's Record Office, whose servant I am, and have kind and considerate masters.

Let me know if my notices of the "Porta della Carta" enable you to make the scene to your liking, and believe me always

Very faithfully yours,

RAWDON BROWNE.

Casa della Vida,
Venice.

September 26, 1871.

MY DEAR MR. CALVERT,

First of all I have to thank you for the Manchester paper received last Tuesday, in which I read with great pleasure your *scholarly* preface, and was not a little flattered and surprised to find that your modesty and good will had publicly transferred to my mere "thunder," the praise due to your own accurate knowledge of what is required for stage effect. You asked about this *quarry* where I live; and I chanced to have a block or two at hand, but the merit of their present form and fashion is exclusively your own; nor could the information have been better bestowed, or put to more useful or practical account, as is evident, after perusal of your second packet received last night.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

The article on your representation of Shylock is so graphic that no one can mistake it for a fancy portrait by a hackney hand, and I sincerely congratulate you on a display of talent and genius, which throws new light on a character two centuries and a half old, and which, despite its age, you now render more truthful and impressive than ever.

Any book which makes human nature think is a great book; and any actor who makes his audience connect their thoughts is no less great a man. This you have done with regard to Shylock, individually, and by nurturing a love for Shakespeare's plays in general, you do much to stem the muddy flood which by slang, jargon, innovation of all sorts, is carrying away the beauties and morality of his language as well as what had hitherto been respected in our national institutions; so, pray persevere in your laudable and successful exertions.

I am expecting Mr. Taylor at Venice to-day, and having secured rooms for him, I sent your packet thither instantly, to give him good and pleasant greeting on his arrival. Again, thanks for your numerous presents, and with every wish for the continuance of that well deserved popularity which you are now enjoying, believe me always,

Very faithfully yours,

RAWDON BROWNE.

8, ALBERT MANSIONS,
S. W.

Dear Calcut.

I have not yet heard of
a lady, & I get on as
badly as possible thank
you.

Yr sincerely

Arthur Sullivan.

14. July 1877.

Sir Arthur Sullivan

On the production of *The Merchant of Venice*, Sir Arthur (then Mr.) Sullivan, accepted the commission to compose the music for the Lorenzo Masque, and came over to conduct it in person, and it was certainly one of the great features of the play.

Sullivan wrote a number of letters to my husband at this time, of which the following is a characteristic example :—

8, Albert Mansions, S.W.

Monday.

MY DEAR CALVERT,

If you don't come at once I shall never do the music. I have sketches, but I can put nothing into form. Make me out a little Scenario, and find me words. I am at home every day.

Yours,

ARTHUR SULLIVAN.

Amongst the purchases made by my husband in Venice was a gondola, which was used in two of the scenes. When the play had finished its career this gondola was bought by a gentleman well known in the art world, and was often seen upon the Thames.

The Merchant of Venice was a very great success. The beautiful Miss Coghlan was the

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Portia. After that came again our yearly visitor, J. L. Toole, and after that, again, the Pantomime, but before that was produced, a great change was made in the governing influences of the Prince's Theatre.

I will quote again from Alfred Darbyshire's *An Architect's Experiences*—

“ In December, 1871, the shareholders of the Prince's Theatre Company, Manchester, were induced to sell their interest in the undertaking to two of the directors, J. M. Wike, and G. H. Browne, or “ Boston Browne,” as he was familiarly called in theatrical circles. I recollect dear Johnny Toole grumbling about this change : he said to me, ‘ I don't know why I should part with my interest in a good going concern, but I suppose it will benefit Calvert somehow.’ So it did : the successful manager was awarded a good share of the profits, and a salary, which, in amount, was unusual in the theatrical profession.”

The large share of the profits mentioned by Mr. Darbyshire was generously added to by the shareholders until it reached the bountiful sum of one thousand pounds. A beautiful casket of silver and gold was also presented to him, which bore upon the lid the following inscription—



THE PRESENTATION CASKET.

A Handsome Testimonial

THIS CASKET,
Enclosing a Copy of the Works of
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
IS PRESENTED TO
CHARLES CALVERT, Esq.,
By the Directors and Shareholders of the
Prince's Theatre Company,
As a token of their high regard for him personally, and
an expression of the satisfaction they feel at the
Honourable and Distinguished position
The Theatre has attained during his Management,
with the sincere hope that under
the New Proprietorship
he may for many years continue those efforts for the
Intellectual Elevation of the Stage, which
he has so successfully inaugurated in Manchester,
and which have added lustre
alike to his name and to the Theatre.

Directors :

JOHN M. WIKE. JOSEPH MANCHESTER.
G. H. BROWNE. H. A. BENNETT.

Shareholders :

HENRY HAYES. JOHN EDWD. WILSON.
JOHN BAGSHAW. WILLIAM B. LAWCOCK.
J. L. TOOLE.

PRINCE'S THEATRE, MANCHESTER.

1871.

The sum of money so generously voted was
invested in the purchase and decoration of a
new house.

CHAPTER VI

AT AVON LODGE

OUR present home had become a sad one to us, for it had lately been the scene of a great sorrow—the loss of a dear little daughter, whose sweet angelic nature had made her the pet of the household. I had also just received the news of the death of my good father in Iowa, U.S.A., which was an additional blow. A newly built house, neither decorated nor papered, was offered to us, and I must again quote from Mr. Darbyshire's book—

“ I have already alluded to my friendship with Charles Calvert. In the summer of 1872 he became my client; he had purchased a house overlooking the Alexandra Park in Manchester; he christened it Avon Lodge, and I was commissioned to alter and decorate it. At this house several of the great Shakespearean ‘ Revivals ’ were discussed, and it was here that dramatic authors and great actors of the time came to read plays and to arrange for their production. Here I first met the late Tom Taylor, with his play of *Handsome is that*

Our New Home in Manchester

Handsome Does, written to supply a leading part for dear old Compton. It was produced at the Prince's Theatre. At Avon Lodge were seen the Hon. Lewis Wingfield, young novelist and aspirant for dramatic honours; the late Alfred Thompson, writer of pantomime and comic operas, costume designer, and facile artist; Alfred Cellier, then conductor of the orchestra at Mr. Calvert's theatre, and afterwards renowned in the musical world; John Lawrence Toole, and many other celebrities with whom it has been my good fortune to contract pleasant friendships. Many memorable gatherings were held in the garden of Avon Lodge, where plays were discussed and criticisms indulged in. The last play I read was Calvert's arrangement of *Sardanapalus*, first produced at the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool; the late Frederiek Clay conducted on the first night his own music, specially written for the production."

Before, however, we took possession of Avon Lodge, the following incident took place. It was the last night of the pantomime of 1871—and I had not seen it, owing to a domestic incident which had necessitated my remaining in the house.

"You may as well come down to-night," said my husband as he left me, after an early

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

dinner, "it's really very funny. I'll order a cab for you as I go, and tell them not to let any one have your box."

In the evening I went up-stairs to dress, and after a few minutes I was told that Mr. Charles Hallé was in the drawing-room, and wanted to see me particularly. When I went down, Mr. Hallé said excitedly, "Mrs. Calvert, it is in your power to do me a very great service." I answered, "If it is in my power, Mr. Hallé, I shall be pleased to do it."

He then said that Mrs. Stirling was announced to read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the following night (which, of course, I knew), but that he had received a telegram that day, to say that she was suffering from inflammation of the eyes, and was unable to leave the house—that every seat in the Free Trade Hall had been booked—that he was in despair—unless Mr. Calvert and myself would get him out of the difficulty by reading the play together. I told him that I feared I could take no part in it, that I had been very ill, and was still far too weak to undertake so important a task at so short a notice.

But, he pleaded, and pleaded, and I felt my firmness giving way. I had such intense admiration for the man, and for his work (for the growth of musical taste in Manchester was entirely due to Charles Hallé), that at last

Sir Charles Hallé

I said, "Well, Mr. Hallé, I am going down to the theatre, and instead of going to my box, I will try and find my husband, and talk the matter over with him. I cannot promise you that I shall succeed, but if you will call or send a messenger to the stage-door at ten o'clock, you shall have the result."

Upon reaching the theatre, I found my husband in his room, and knowing that time was short, I plunged at once into the subject.

"Charles Hallé called on me this evening and——"

"Yes, I expected *that*," he interrupted, to my great astonishment; "his agent has been with me this afternoon, begging me to read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to-morrow night. Why, I wouldn't do it for fifty pounds."

This was somewhat discouraging. I had heard nothing about the agent. However, I tried again. "Well, I dare say you wouldn't care to undertake it by yourself, but surely we might manage to do it together!"

"How do you mean? Do it together? How could we?"

"This way. I will take all the women's parts, and I will also take Puck, as I know the music well, and many of Puck's lines are spoken through it. Hallé has left me a copy of the play as it is cut down. The whole thing is only to last an hour and a half with all the

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

music." And then I added, in a pleading tone, "I think we might manage to do it for him."

He wavered. "But what about the committee? Will they like me to do it?" The question was solved by sending a messenger to the front of the house, where two of the committee were found enjoying the pantomime. They were asked to step round to Mr. Calvert's room, and when the matter was laid before them, one of them said: "Certainly, Calvert, by all means. It will be a tremendous feather in your cap to have got such a man as Hallé out of a hole." This settled it, and when Mr. Hallé called at ten o'clock, he received a little note saying that we agreed to do it.

By nine o'clock the next morning, the hoardings in and around Manchester were placarded with posters announcing that "Mr. and Mrs. Charles Calvert had generously, etc., etc.!"

The next day, the Free Trade Hall being given up to the cleaners, etc., we had to meet at the Gentleman's Concert Hall at twelve o'clock to run through the play, but we had only a limited number of the band and chorus.

Then the night came. The hall was packed to overflowing. Nearly 4,000 people were present. Hallé had a splendid reception—looked round upon his army of assistants—and then came to lead us forward. The



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT IN 1891.

Hallé's Concert at Free Trade Hall

welcome that greeted us transcended, I think, anything that we had ever known, and we were not unused to big receptions from that warm-hearted, generous Manchester public. It brought tears to my eyes, and it was almost with a feeling of relief that I heard it subside, and we were able to take our seats.

With the first grand burst of the orchestra, came another trial for my poor nerves. I had, of course, listened to Hallé's magnificent band many and many a time, but to be in the midst of them—300 instrumentalists and vocalists! it deafened me—it frightened me, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I kept my nerve.

But, when it was all over, and Hallé descended from his desk to grasp our hands warmly, and to exclaim loudly, "Thank you! thank you!"—and the plaudits, rising to cheers, were redoubled—then I felt that the play had been worth the candle, and that that evening had "marked with a white stone" an event in our lives that neither of us would ever forget. I may add that in the following year, Mr. Hallé engaged us for a repetition of the reading.

Soon after we were settled at Avon Lodge, my husband took our three eldest boys over to Germany, to finish their education there. It was his earnest hope that the lads would adopt a commercial life. He had many friends

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

among the large German firms in Manchester, and he felt that a knowledge of the German language would be almost a *sine qua non*, should he ever be able to place his sons with them. Our younger children, of course, remained with us, and from among the many little incidents of their childhood's days, one, in particular, comes back to my memory.

Our little son, Alex, when about five years of age, looked up at his father one day, and said, in plaintive tones, "I've no money!"

We both laughed heartily, and his father said, "Ah, well, we must remedy that calamity," and dropped some pennies into his small pocket.

But, a few days afterwards, we were sitting upon the lawn with some friends who had dined with us, and Alex ran out of the house. Going straight up to Tom Taylor, he said, with a woeful countenance, "I've no money!"

"Be quiet, Alex," said his father; "you're a naughty boy. You mustn't say that."

Our conversation was then recommenced, but, during a temporary lull, there arose the same melancholy cry: "I've no money!"

The culprit was immediately sent into the house, in disgrace. About ten minutes after, we saw that he had crept out, and was hiding behind one of the bushes, so his father called to him—

Sir Charles Santley

“ Are you a good boy now ? ”

“ Yes, papa.”

“ Then you may come out.”

He came forward, again he walked up to Tom Taylor, and again there was the same woeful look, and the same sad wail—“ I’ve no money ! ”

This time there was no reprieve. He was imprisoned in the nursery until we left for the theatre.

During the summer, the engagements at the Prince’s Theatre included an Opera company, of which Ilma di Murska was the *prima donna*; a gentleman whom I will call “ Signor Malavoce,” was the basso; and Charles Santley, the baritone, and the *principal* attraction. Many tales are told of Santley’s unassuming and unselfish nature, and here is one to add to the number.

Dressing - room accommodation at the Prince’s was very limited, and, knowing the difficulties that usually arise with Opera artists : how Signor A—— refuses to dress with Signor B——, and how Signor C—— considers himself of more importance than A—— and B—— together, my husband himself allotted the rooms. After arranging for the *prima donna*, the contralto, and Santley, he found he had no room for Signor Malavoce, except at the top of the house. He therefore had a large space cleared under

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

the stage, hung round with curtains, well carpeted and lighted, and made thoroughly comfortable.

On the Monday night, after the first performance, whilst we were chatting over our supper, my husband said to me, "What a splendid fellow Santley is! You know what I told you about the dressing-rooms. Well, I was very busy writing about six o'clock, when Wilson came up and said, 'Please, sir, Signor Malavoce says he's not going to dress under the stage, and he's taken Mr. Santley's room and locked himself in!' Well," said my husband, continuing, "there was only one thing to do. I must give up my own room. So I said, 'Go down, and when Mr. Santley comes, show him up here, and send Jessup to tidy up my papers.' This was being done, when Wilson came back again. 'Please, sir, the stage door-keeper says that Mr. Santley came in some few minutes ago, but we can't find him anywhere.' So down I went, and, at last, in the room under the stage, I found Santley quietly dressing. I said, 'Santley, my dear fellow, I hope you don't think this place was intended for you. Malavoce has taken your room, so I have had my own tidied up for you. Come along.' But Santley answered, 'Nonsense, Calvert! I'm not going to turn you out of your room. This is all right.

Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Ireland

If I never have anything worse than this, I shan't hurt!'" And Santley remained there the whole of the engagement, which, I think, ought to have been something of a lesson for Signor Malavoe!

Amongst the list of our most valued friends must be included Mr. Alexander Ireland, the friend of Ruskin and Carlyle, and author of *The Book-lover's Enchiridion*, and his talented wife, authoress of the *Life of Jane Welch Carlyle*.

Mr. and Mrs. Ireland, when we first knew them, were at the height of their prosperity. He was part proprietor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, which was then the leading paper of the city, and enjoying a tremendous amount of popular favour, and many a happy afternoon have we spent in the lovely garden of their beautiful home at Bowdon, a few miles from Manchester. But dark days loomed over them. The newspaper, through political changes, gradually lost its hold upon the public, and, at last, was doomed to extinction, and their beautiful home had to be given up for a less expensive one.

The devoted wife then invoked the aid of her pen to assist them in meeting the heavy expenses of their large family. She wrote three powerful lectures on Browning, which she delivered with such success at the "Schiller

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Anstalt " in Manchester, and kindred institutions in other towns, that she could easily have filled up dates for a whole year, but her health broke down under the strain of the incidental travelling and excitement, and she then accepted a position as book reviewer on the *Manchester Courier*, and also produced her successful and delightfully impartial *Life of Jane Welch Carlyle*, and other works followed.

We were close friends until her early and lamented death, and from out of her numerous letters I select one that bears upon her literary work.

31, Mauldeth Road,
Fallowfield,
Manchester.
February 27, 1891.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was rejoiced to hear from you, with good tidings. I can also give cheery news. I am much better in health, stronger than for years past, and up to the hilt in business. Chatto and Windus took my Carlyle volume (Allen and Co. having come to grief at Christmas), and this book is now going through the press, which means that I am a slave to the Printer or Printer's devil. Morning after morning come these sets of proofs—revises—second revises—till I am fairly held by the neck to keep up with them. They are cer-

Mrs. Alexander Ireland

tainly awfully “spry” as the Yankees say, and if ever you want to publish, I can recommend these gentlemen, who are thoroughly liberal.

I am doing another book for them, to come out in a month or two, and I have two regular engagements on daily papers. Oh, I *am* busy. You are not destined to be one of “the great *unemployed*” very long. I don’t believe it. Enjoy your brief rest, and get all the good you can. Work is a fine thing. It has quite set me up—work and pay. I agree with the man who said “Blessed Drudgery”!!! That is left us when so much is torn away.

My illness was frightfully expensive. I can never afford one again. I have just begun to go forth again, and was amused to find myself at the “Gentleman’s Concert” last week, hearing Hallé and Neruda—the first time this six years. I enjoyed myself immensely. We have German friends—professional—next door, who often send us tickets.

We have had many callers too, so many Owen’s College Professors—Wards, Boyd Dawkins, Williamsons, Tollers, Touts, Adamsons, Hopkinsons, etc., all nice people. I suppose my brother’s name has caused this kindly feeling towards me. We give no dinners, but I have an evening each week, and generally some pleasant people drop in.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Tell me if you are ever near us. I would like a talk so dearly.

Ever faithfully attached,

ANNIE E. IRELAND.

Always give me an address !

I also introduce a little poem which she one day enclosed in one of her letters to me, and which has never been published. I had previously sent her, in one of my own epistles, some jingling rhymes which I had strung together, and which were supposed to be a weak imitation of Tennyson, and she responded with this clever imitation of Browning (in his lighter mood)—

COINCIDENT POLARITY !

What if the wondrous pearls
Of my coruseated thought
In the airy cell of my dream
(Though, believe me—I count it nought)
Were gathered and massed by the hand
Of the Infinite Wherefore
And all that I counted as mine, as my soul's
(Nay, but it *is*, tho' the needy may brawl)
Thus to be spent and divided
You and I, my friend of resplendent gait
While a wretched failure o'erhangs.
Well, well, but a man can wait!
And the crumbling columns groan
And murmur—no matter what.
It is damp, the dew falls, let us go.
Oh, Love ! I will keep what I've got!

J. L. Toole

What a delightful friend was J. L. Toole, and with what pleasure we always looked forward to his visits! His funny stories always “set the table on a roar,” and his happy, genial nature, in which there was never a trace of bitterness or malevolence, rendered him a favourite wheresoever he went.

How the children loved him, and how he delighted in playing off little practical jokes on them! I remember when our young son Alex had just doffed his petticoats and was installed in his first jacket and knickerbockers (a time which he used to allude to as “When I was a girl, and wore froeks”), that Toole gave him a sixpence and made him put it carefully away in his pocket, from which Toole soon after abstracted it, unseen.

After dinner, I heard him say—

“Alex, what was it I gave you this afternoon?”

“Sixpence.”

“What did you do with it?”

“I put it in my pocket.”

“But it isn’t there now.”

“Yes it is.”

“No, I’m sure it’s not. You just feel.”

Alex dived, and with a face woefully long, he said, “No, it isn’t. It’s gone.”

Then Toole said solemnly: “That sixpence is a fairy sixpence, and I saw it fly out of your

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pocket. Now, let us go and see where it has flown to.”

Leading the boy round the room, they examined carefully the articles of furniture until they discovered the coin adhering to a panel of the door, where Toole had fixed it with a morsel of beeswax. He carried a piece in his waistcoat pocket for this and similar experiments. Alex regarded that sixpence with awe, and insisted on spending it the following day, for fear it should fly away again.

I remember, too, when Toole was playing an exceptionally fine engagement with us, that he said, laughingly, “Oh, by the way, Calvert, if my wife comes down next week, don’t say anything about the big receipts. You see, I’ve a lot of nephews and nieces, and they all expect tips from Uncle Johnnie. Last year they had over four hundred pounds from me, and my wife thinks I rather overdo it.”

During the run of *The Merchant of Venice*, having no theatrical duties, I had time for other employment, and I set to work to adapt *The Chimes*, with the idea of Toole playing Trotty Veek. Some time in the following summer, during our stay at Avon Lodge, it was finished and sent up to Toole, who at once accepted it, and forwarded me a cheque for fifty guineas. It was produced at the “Gaiety,” and

My Play at the Gaiety

John Hollingshead, on the first night, wired, "Play a success."

My husband had some business in London during the following weeks, so I took advantage of it to go with him, in order to witness the play. We went together to the "Gaiety," and a more terrible disappointment I have never felt. Not a shilling had been spent on the production. Old scenery had been raked out from the scene dock, and old dresses from the wardrobe. One scene, supposed to represent a small room at the back of a shop, had a window painted on it, through which were seen the *tops of trees*. The Spirit of the Chimes, which was described in the MS. as: "A young girl, with long golden hair, dressed in a soft flowing robe of white, upon the hem of which the Hours are embroidered in black," materialized into a bouncing lady wearing a dress of pink satin. It had been used through the long run of a classical burlesque, and was made *à la Grecque*, the skirt being slit up at one side, to reveal a considerable portion of limb, which terminated at the pedal extremity in a boot, also of pink satin, and furnished with a pair of very high heels. When the Spirit had to make its appearances, which should have been very gradual and mysterious, through the aid of transparencies, etc., this substantial lady came banging through a spring door in the flat, *à*

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l'arlequin, or was shot up through a trap from beneath the stage.

My cruel disappointment was so blended with my sense of the humorous, that I scarcely knew at first whether to laugh or to cry, but I left the theatre a very miserable woman, and we both felt that it would not be wise to go round to Toole's dressing-room after the performance. My husband, after our return home, wrote strongly remonstrant letters to both Toole and Hollingshead, but, of course, it was too late, and nothing could be done, and nothing *was* done. The play ran some six or seven weeks, for in spite of these shameful incongruities, Toole's pathetic Trotty Veek appealed to his audiences and carried their sympathies; the scene where Trotty realizes that it is only a dream being received each night with hearty peals of applause, and the curtain always falling to enthusiastic calls.

The next time that my husband and I visited London, we spent a very happy evening with Mr. and Mrs. Toole and their bright and pretty daughter. We were shown, with much pride, a handsome little chamber organ, which Toole had bought for his son (his only one). The boy was passionately fond of music, and was coming home from college for his holidays, and this was to be a surprise for him when he returned.

Samuel Phelps

It was a bitter trial to me when, some years later, I saw, upon the pier at Brighton, poor Toole wheeled along in an invalid's chair—a hopeless wreck—almost incapable of speech. “The slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune” had indeed smitten him sorely. Blow after blow had fallen, and left him crushed and helpless. His only son was taken from him after a brief illness—the result, it was believed, of an accident in the cricket field. His only daughter, in the very dawn of happy womanhood, affianced to the man she loved, and already, with girlish delight, choosing her trousseau, went with her mother to Scotland to stay for a few weeks with her father, who was touring there, contracted, in some insanitary hotel, that terrible scourge, typhoid fever—and she, too, was taken from them. And then, in the midst of this intense grief, there came the death of his wife. Paralysis followed in the train of these overwhelming trials, and the life of the poor stricken one became a living death.

Another good friend of ours was Samuel Phelps. Mr. Phelps had fulfilled an annual engagement at the “Prince’s” for several years, but I had never been required for any of the plays that he had appeared in. This year, however, the opportunity arrived.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

He brought with him (for a three weeks' engagement) a modern play which had been written for him, and the part which he sustained in it was one of which he was specially fond. It was expected that it would run the whole three weeks, but after its production on the Monday night we found that the Press criticisms were decidedly adverse. Whilst giving Mr. Phelps every credit for an earnest and artistic piece of work, they regretted that he had elected to appear in a class of play which was altogether unworthy of his fine powers. Samuel Phelps in a frock-coat and trousers was an absolute shock to all those who cherished theatrical traditions, and they implored him to relegate the MS. to the family cupboard as quickly as possible, and revert to some of his fine Shakespearean parts.

My husband, upon going down to the theatre, the same morning on which the criticisms appeared, was met by some of the committee, who informed him that the booking office was comparatively empty, and that something must be done. So, after a hurried consultation with Phelps, he returned home, and astonished me by saying: "Can you study Katherine of Aragon to play it next Monday night?" I answered with a woman-like question, "What about my dresses?" "Oh, you need not trouble about those.



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS KATHERINE OF ARRAGON.

Readings at the Royal Institution

I'll see they're all right. We've got the plates in our costume book, and I'll wire for a woman from London to come down and take them in hand. Now then, can you study it?" I said, "Yes."

Posters were issued as quickly as possible to announce that on the following Monday Mr. Phelps would appear as Cardinal Wolsey, and the public again flocked to see their favourite in a part in which his talent shone out so conspicuously.

This was my first association with him, but towards the end of the engagement, Macklin's *Man of the World* was put up for a few nights, and I played Lady Rodolpha Lumbercourt to his wonderful impersonation of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant.

During the last three or four years that we lived in Manchester I was engaged by the committee of the Royal British Institution to give readings from the poets, in their lecture room, on Wednesday afternoons during the winter session. As there were three of these readings in the year, and each one embraced some nine or ten items, it follows that they required a considerable amount of research (for I very seldom repeated anything), and I had to scamper through dozens of volumes to obtain the requisite material.

I received one day the following letter—

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Rosspport Lodge,
Belmullet,
County Mayo,
Ireland.
December 20.

DEAR MADAM,

A friend writes to tell me that you have been publicly reading some of my poems, and that you have actually read, successfully too, the "Ballad of Judas Iseariot,"—which last piece of news is to me so astonishing that I am tempted to ask particulars at the fountain head. That you should have faced an audience with such a poem, strikes me as singularly original and courageous, but that you should have moved that audience with it, in defiance of popular prejudice, is a proof of extraordinary genius. Do tell me all about it, if I am not rude in asking the favour. I fervently believe that one who could do so much with "Judas Iseariot" could read even "The Vision of the Man Accurst" with overwhelming effect. Do you know the last-named poem?

Forgive this abrupt note, and believe me fully conscious of the honour you do me and the help such interpretation gives me.

Yours most truly,
ROBERT BUCHANAN.

I was compelled to reply that, intensely as I admired the poem, I was afraid to include

Robert Buchanan

it in my programme. Many of the lines in the "Vision of the Man Accurst" were supposed to be spoken by the First Person of the Trinity, and, as my audiences usually included schools, it might be regarded by the teachers as savouring of profanity.

I included several of Buchanan's poems, however, in my readings—"Langley Lane," "Lord Ronald's Wife," and that stirring ballad of the Covenanters, "The Battle of Drumliemoor."

I always felt that Robert Buchanan was a man greatly underrated. His "Ballad of Judas Iseariot," and the "Vision of the Man Accurst," seemed to me to rise to absolute grandeur. His novel, *God and the Man*, was powerful in the extreme, and his "Ode to David in Heaven" (a young lad, who died of consumption, and who was Buchanan's companion through years of poverty and misfortune) touches the very soul and essence of poetry. But his bitter diatribe against "The Fleshly School," published in the *Saturday Review*, and hurled chiefly against Swinburne and Rossetti, raised up against him many powerful enemies, and their adverse influences combined to check his career, and keep him from the goal.

He rests in the little churchyard at Southend, where Mr. T. P. O'Connor, a few years ago, unveiled a memorial over his grave.

CHAPTER VII

A GREAT PRODUCTION

IN the autumn came the production of *Henry the Fifth*, which was acknowledged to eclipse all its predecessors in splendour, as well as in archæological accuracy of detail.

Mr. Alfred Darbyshire was commissioned to undertake the latter, and in his book (from which I have so often quoted) he says—

“ I have said that Charles Calvert’s revivals were educational in their scope as well as dramatic. In *Henry the Fifth* I made an effort to display the heraldry of the time; and the banners, shields, and other devices actually used at Agincourt were, after much labour and research, faithfully reproduced. In the process of investigation certain points in English heraldry, about which doubts had existed, were set at rest and settled, and for the first time the Agincourt roll-of-arms was blazoned. It cannot be doubted that this production of *Henry the Fifth* in Manchester was an event of importance in stage history.

“ The entry into London in *Henry the Fifth*

Shakespeare's 'Henry the Fifth'

contained between two and three hundred persons; but on the first night they were perfect, and all went 'merry as a marriage bell.' There are old playgoers who still have pleasant memories of this great scene. To me it was the realization of an ideal: it represented all that art and stagecraft could do to illustrate a great historical poem. Those who saw the scene will not have forgotten the crowd of citizens, artisans, youths, maidens, and nobles of the land who filled the streets and temporary balconies hung with tapestries, and who with eager expectation awaited the arrival of the young king-hero at the entrance to London Bridge. One remembers the distant hum of voices and how the volume of sound swelled as the little army approached on its march from Blackheath; how the sound burst into a mighty shout as the hero of Agincourt rode through the triumphal archway, the 'Deo gratias, Anglia, redde pro victoria,' and other hymns of praise filled the air, showers of gold-dust fell from the turrets, red roses of Lancaster covered the rude pavements, the bells clashed out, and a great thanksgiving went up to Heaven for the preservation of the gallant King and his little army of heroes. The curtain descended on a perfect picture of mediæval England!"

At the fall of the curtain on the last night of

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Henry the Fifth, my husband delivered a fare-well speech, in which he said—

“This night is the end of a memorable event, and in reviewing the results of this, our latest effort, I see three especial reasons for mutual exultation—the success in every sense of the production, the enlarging taste for the works of the greatest dramatist that ever lived, and the indisputable fact that the ignorant prejudice against the theatre as an institution is declining. I feel assured that these three truths are as gratifying to you as they are to me, and although at this moment it is your good pleasure to direct your approval towards your humble servant, still the chief merit rests with you; for had you not supported and encouraged us we should have reaped nothing but the consolation that we had suffered in a good cause. But this night marks the accomplishment of one of the greatest Shakespearean triumphs that has ever been known in the history of art. A greater amount of money has been paid to obtain admission to the performance of *Henry the Fifth*, and a greater display of enthusiasm has been shown regarding the play, than can be recorded in our previous annals. I ask you who, by your oft-repeated visits to these representations, have testified that to Shakespeare at the Prince’s Theatre you owe many and many



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS CHORUS IN HENRY V

Chorus

an evening of keen enjoyment, to bear your testimony to the certain truth, that that inspired man has not written in vain; nor should the stage of our country, that he so graced with his genius, be denounced as a vain thing.

“ I appreciate very highly the honour you do me this night. My crown of ‘ borrowed majesty ’ I now give up. My court is dismissed; my soldiers disbanded and their bows unstrung; and all our glories fade from your view; but I hope not from your memories. The laurels you bestow on me by your applause, and by your hearty and enthusiastic patronage during the seventy-four representations of the play, you will, I am sure, allow me to share with my brothers and sisters in art, to whom I am indebted for a zealous and hearty co-operation, and who are now assembled in some numbers behind this curtain, and anxious with me to bow their acknowledgements of the honours you this night confer ! ”

My husband was very undecided about the part of Chorus. He had seen, many years before, Charles Kean’s fine production at the Princess’s Theatre, London, but the Chorus of Mrs. Charles Kean, clad in vivid blue and scarlet, and with her hair done in the Victorian style (from which she never deviated, no matter

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

what part she was playing), had remained in his recollection as unpoetic, and slightly wearisome. His first intention was to leave the part out altogether, but on mentioning this to Tom Taylor, the suggestion was met with a storm of indignant expostulation.

“Cut out Chorus? Why, my dear fellow, you can't possibly do such a thing. The part contains some of the finest and most poetic lines that Shakespeare ever wrote.”

Mr. Taylor afterwards suggested that it should be played by a man in the costume of a herald. But, when my husband and I were discussing this, on his return from London, I pointed out that the tabard of a herald would not be any more poetic than Mrs. Kean's robes of scarlet and blue, whilst a man's voice would scarcely lend itself to the pathos of the beautiful description of the night before Agincourt. With this he agreed.

A few days after, I said, “Here's an idea. How would this be? The stage to represent a mass of snow-white mountain peaks, and, in the centre, a woman with a long flowing dress of white, large white wings, and a golden crown, with an intense white light thrown on her.” After a moment's reflection, he said, “Yes, I think that would do; we'll try it.”

And so he had a scene hurriedly rubbed in,

‘Henry the Fifth’ in Birmingham

and I had a dress of white run up, also hurriedly, and we spent three hours in the theatre one afternoon, to see how it would “pan out,” as the gold-miners say. The thing was an utter failure. We had omitted to take into consideration the fact that the stage at the back was occupied by the heavy sets required in the other scenes, and, therefore, it was impossible to get any distance, and it was also impossible to cover in with white down to the footlights the dark-looking boards without creating considerable delay each time the scene was shown. Then a scheme of grey was decided upon, and eventually used. Grey rocks, soft silk robes of a pale bluey grey, and a pale-blue light upon Chorus, who stood upon a clump of the rocks. The accessories of Chorus were changed from time to time, as the story proceeded. At first, as Rumour, a golden trumpet. Then, before the siege of Harfleur, the mural crown, sword and shield; and, at the last, before the royal marriage, garlands of white roses.

The year following the production of *Henry the Fifth* at Manchester, it was transposed to the Prince of Wales’s Theatre, Birmingham, for a run of four weeks. As my husband could not be spared for so long a time from his managerial duties in Manchester, the part of the King was to be sustained by Mr. Reginald Moore,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

who was specially engaged for it, but the committee were anxious that upon the opening night, and that night only, my husband should appear as the warrior-king, thus retaining intact the east of the original production, and helping to give the play a good send-off.

I, of course, was required for the part of Chorus, and when he and I had talked it over it was decided that we should try to get a small furnished house in Birmingham (where a servant was left in charge), and that I should take over with me there the four youngest children and their nurse, my husband proposing to come over by the Saturday night mail, and stay with us for the week-ends. We obtained the house we sought for there, and went over *en masse*. We had several rehearsals during the following week, and then my husband left us on the Saturday afternoon for urgent business in Manchester, and was to return on the Monday in time for the opening performance.

But, on the Monday, when his cab drove up to the gate, I was horrified to see him alight looking ghastly ill, and evidently as feeble as a child. We absolutely had to lead him into the house, and a medical man was sent for. I implored him to let me give notice at once to the theatre that it was impossible for him to play that night, but he refused, said he

A Sad Evening

should be better after a couple of hours' rest, and that he felt sure he would get through. The doctor arrived and at once ordered him to bed, which unfortunately was quite out of the question. At the patient's earnest entreaty, however, he administered a hypodermic injection of morphia, which calmed down the rapid pulse and feverish excitement and gave him a couple of hours' rest. By the time we had to start for the theatre he had enjoyed some tea, and was so much better, that I had every hope of his being able to pull through, for I had seen him many a time before, fight through an arduous part under the same painful circumstances.

His dressing-room was on a level with the stage, whilst mine was up a few steps from the prompt entrance, from which, however, I could hear all that was spoken as the play proceeded. As the scenes for Chorus are only a series of soliloquies, and as during those scenes he was in his dressing-room changing his costume, I had no chance of exchanging a word with him, but from my room I listened anxiously and followed each speech as he spoke it, until he reached the words: "O God of Battles, steel my soldiers' hearts!" Then came a dead silence. I darted through the door of my dressing-room, but some one caught me by the wrist, and held me, saying,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

“It’s all right, it’s all right.” Then I heard him tell the audience, in faint, gasping tones, that it was impossible for him to go on, that Reginald Moore would play the part on the following night, and that the audience could exchange their seats, or have the money returned, and then the curtain was rung down upon a scene of the greatest excitement.

Close to where I stood was an open door, communicating with the dress circle, and through it came a gentleman, who said to me, hurriedly: “I’m a medical man, Mrs. Calvert, I’m going down to see what I can do,” and disappeared down the staircase. I changed my dress rapidly, and whilst I was doing so, they brought me word that he was much better, and would soon be sufficiently recovered to be taken home.

I learned afterwards that when the doctors reached him (there were two) his pulse was 104, but when his armour had been stripped off, and his dress loosened at the throat, it began rapidly to decrease. The next day found him still weak, but quite calm, and he recovered with such rapidity that by the end of the week he was able to return to Manchester and attend to business.

At this time I received the following kind letter from Lady Theodore Martin (Helen Faucit)—

Lady Theodore Martin

Bryntyoilio, Llangollen,
N. Wales.

October 1, 1873.

MY DEAR MADAM,

With great regret I read lately in a Birmingham paper of Mr. Calvert's serious illness.

It appeared from the account that he had been overtaxing his strength. I trust this was the only cause, and that rest and care have had their effect in soothing and healing the strained nervous powers.

I did not trouble you earlier, but it will give Mr. Martin and myself much pleasure if at your convenience you will give us news of your husband's progress towards health.

With very kind wishes and regards to yourself and Mr. Calvert,

Believe me truly yours,

HELEN FAUCIT MARTIN.

I was thankful to be able to write in reply that my husband had quite recovered, and was then in Manchester.

Henry the Fifth, with Reginald Moore as the King, successfully fulfilled its month's duration, and netted for the two proprietors of the Prince's Theatre a profit of £1000, and this with low prices, and only a moderate-sized auditorium.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

In *Henry the Fifth* at the Prince's Theatre, 120 supers were engaged; they dressed underneath the stage, but *how* I never dared to inquire. They must have been packed away like sardines, and, whenever I thought of them, visions of the Black Hole of Calcutta would come into my mind. However, they bore the inconvenience most valiantly, and felt, I think, as Englishmen, very proud of being associated with the glories of Agincourt.

My husband told me that with the speech: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends," they rose each night to such a pitch of excitement, that as he rushed up the eminence, followed by the shouting soldiery, the moment he was out of sight of the audience, he had to jump down and get underneath the platform, or he would, most assuredly, have been mown down by his own men.

When the play was transferred to Birmingham, a number of these men came forward and asked to be allowed to go with it. They would willingly pay their own fares, but they wanted to go for the pleasure of the thing. Their offer was gladly accepted, of course, and some thirty or forty turned up in Birmingham at the first rehearsal. Now the standard price of a super in Birmingham was a shilling a night, but my husband had for several seasons

A Threatened Strike

in Manchester, increased that sum to eighteen-pence.

After the first night or two, the Birmingham men found out that this was the case, and insisted upon being paid the same, which my husband was willing to agree to, but thought it only fair to inform the manager (James Rodgers) of the proposed step.

Mr. Rodgers, however, called upon us (my husband being still an invalid), and implored him not to do so. "You see, Calvert," he said, "what the consequences will be to me. I shall never be able to return to the old price, and I shall have to pay these men fifty per cent. more through the whole of my pantomime."

Then the question arose what was to be done if the men struck, as they threatened to do?

We had, however, a very clever super-master, a big, powerful man, who, upon being consulted, said, "Oh, I think I can manage it!" So, that night, he placed himself against the stage-door, and as the men came up, one by one, said, "Now then, which is it to be? A shilling or eighteen-pence?" When the man replied, "Eighteen-pence," he said, "Can't do it. Stand back!" Then some of the more timid ones said "A shilling." "All right. Go in," was the response.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

As the stragglers came up by twos and threes, they had no time to band together and pass resolutions, so the upshot was that on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, they, with very few exceptions, gave way, and the proposed strike collapsed.

Towards the end of the following year Messrs. Jarrett and Palmer, of New York, made a proposal to purchase the play. Their liberal offer was accepted by the directors, but to the purchase was attached the proviso that my husband was to go over and produce it, which was also acceded to. Jarrett and Palmer had had a most disastrous season—a succession of failures, and *Henry the Fifth* was the last plank to which they were clinging to save themselves from shipwreck. They could, however, only allow it a run of six weeks, as they had signed a contract with Adelaide Neilson to appear at the end of that time.

It then occurred to me, that here was an opportunity of seeing my relatives once more. During the long years in which we had been separated, I had wondered many and many a time if we should ever meet again. There seemed little probability of it. None of us had means enough to justify our crossing the Atlantic for the sake of pleasure only, and, so far, business had never lent itself to favour

We Start for New York

the undertaking. Here, at last, there seemed a chance. I, therefore, suggested to my husband that if he could only get me engaged for Chorus, all my expenses would be paid, and a considerable sum left in hand, and I should be able to visit my sister whom I had not seen for sixteen years. I also mentioned that my aunt would gladly come and take charge of the children and the house during the few weeks of my absence.

He consented, wrote to Jarrett and Palmer, who at once sent a letter of engagement, by which I was to have first-class fares paid there and back, and a salary of \$100 a week.

Before leaving England, a farewell dinner was tendered my husband, Mr. Tom Taylor being in the chair, and I had a presentation of a very handsome bracelet, set with fine pearls, bearing this inscription—

To

ADELAIDE HELEN CALVERT,

from a few ladies :

January 12th, 1875.

“ A most worthy lady and one whom much we honour.”

—*The Winter's Tale.*

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Whilst the rehearsals in New York were proceeding I had time to stay in Boston for a few weeks, and once more I saw my dear sister Clara (Mrs. Thomas Barry). I found her in a pleasant home there, with her three young daughters, her only son, and, alas! her invalid husband. During their stay in Chicago, where they went after the fiasco of the Boston Theatre, another company was formed in Boston, and the theatre was floated again. One of the first steps of the new directorate was an offer for Mr. Barry and my sister to return there, but his health had broken down under the severe blow of his heavy losses, and that terrible malady, locomotor-ataxy, had set in. Upon my sister's sole exertions depended her husband and her children. The directors then asked her to return in the position of leading actress, at a salary of \$100 a week (then considered a very liberal one), and a 50 per cent. share of a benefit one night each season. This she gladly accepted.

Her work at the theatre was very arduous. Continuous study, long rehearsals, having to supply her own costumes (which economy compelled her to have done at home), and the management of her house and children, left her little time for relaxation. But she told me that in spite of it all she was not unhappy.

'Henry the Fifth' in New York

She knew that she was doing her best, and felt very proud that, by her own exertions, she was able to provide every comfort for her children and the husband who had been so devoted to her.

Mr. Barry's helpless condition evoked great sympathy. All his old friends tried to outdo each other in acts of kindness. Scarcely a day passed, but something was left at the house with a kindly message: Baskets of game, fresh vegetables and fruit, cases of champagne, choice hothouse flowers, etc. At my sister's benefit, too, her friends rallied round her so nobly, that one-dollar seats sometimes realized five times that amount, and the theatre was crowded from floor to ceiling. From one of her benefits she received the large sum of \$3000 = £600.

My brief stay in Boston came to an end, and I returned to New York for the opening night of *Henry the Fifth*, which proved an enormous success. My husband remained until the third representation had taken place, and then was compelled to sail for home, to resume his duties at the Prince's Theatre, whilst I remained to fulfil my engagement as Chorus.

Henry the Fifth went on week after week to crowded houses and great enthusiasm, and when the sixth week was approaching, and

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

there was no diminution of the receipts, Messrs. Jarrett and Palmer appealed to Miss Adelaide Neilson to postpone the date fixed for her coming. She agreed to this, and *Henry the Fifth* continued its brilliant career. When the second date of her contract had arrived, she was appealed to again (the nightly receipts being as large as ever), and again she agreed to defer her engagement. But there came a time when Miss Neilson insisted upon the contract being carried out, or very heavy compensation given her for its non-fulfilment. So, the final weeks of *Henry the Fifth* were announced, and a long tour organized for the successful play.

As, of course, my husband had been unable to undertake the part of Henry, Mr. George Rignold was engaged to play it. His performance was excellent, and he toured America for some time after with the production, which he afterwards acquired from Jarrett and Palmer, and carried to Australia, where he opened Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, New South Wales, with it, reviving it many times after.

With the withdrawal of *Henry the Fifth* in New York, of course, my engagement ceased. I had had frequent news from home. The children were all well, my husband hard at

'Henry the Fifth' in New York

work. I learned, too that the directorate were acquiring the Queen's Theatre, with a view to running it in conjunction with the Prince's, and that my husband would have control of both.

CHAPTER VIII

LEAVING MANCHESTER—AND AFTERWARDS

I HAD booked my passage for my return home, when I received from my husband by cable the disheartening news that he had quarrelled with the directors, that they had annulled his contract, and that he was leaving Manchester. No details were given at the time, but I found out later that the cause of the rupture was this : The Queen's Theatre had been opened with a production of *Henry the Fourth*. The company was sent down by Hollingshead, and included Phelps as Falstaff, my husband superintending all the arrangements. He had had no proper understanding with the directors, but felt so sure that they would behave liberally, that he deferred any explanation, until the hurry and excitement of the opening night was over. He then found that they expected him to carry on the direction of both theatres for the same salary he was receiving for the one. This he refused to do, hasty words followed, and the rupture was complete. *Sardanapalus* was to have been one of their future productions, and some of the costumes and scenery

Sudbrooke Park, Richmond

were already nearly finished. But as the play would have been no use to them without his guiding hand they presented him with the material as a parting gift.

Upon landing at Liverpool I took the train at once for London, and joined my husband and children at Dr. Lane's Hydropathic Establishment, Sudbrooke Park, near Richmond. We had stayed there before on our visits to London, and my husband had always found great benefit from the air and the treatment.

It is a wonderful old mansion, formerly belonging to the Argyll family, and it is said that this was the house to which Jeanie Deans, weary and footsore, found her way to plead with the Duke of Argyll for her sister's pardon. Its grounds are an enclosed portion of Richmond Park, and include a tract of forest, where, beneath huge trees, the hawthorn and blackberry bushes spread themselves in a wild tangle, interspersed with ground ivies, and masses of numerous wild flowers. Seats are scattered about, and on a hot summer's day, "The Wilderness," as it was called, was an ideal retreat. We stayed at Sudbrooke Park for several months, my husband booking dates for his autumn tour with *Sardanapalus*, and occasionally going up to town to supervise the completion of the scenery and costumes.

Before the commencement of the tour, how-

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

ever, we had both arrived at the conclusion that another home was necessary. For one thing, the children were spoiled by the numerous inmates, who would carry them away to their rooms, and cram them with dainties, the result being that lessons were neglected, internal discomforts ensued, and discipline became an unknown quantity. For another thing, my husband had an intimation that a fine post would be awaiting him in the following year. A project was being formed for a Grand Opera House upon the Thames Embankment, of which Colonel Mapleson and Madame Titiens were to be the presiding geniuses. They were both anxious to secure my husband's services, Colonel Mapleson saying, "We want you, Calvert, to do for Opera what you have already done for Shakespeare." It was therefore probable that during his tour with *Sardanapalus* he might have occasionally to travel by the Saturday midnight train, to discuss business on the Sunday—and a home where there was quiet and privacy was absolutely essential.

My husband one day in his rambles found at Mortlake an old building called "Fairfax House." It stood in a lane close to the river, and was shut in by old walls. Upon entering the front door, you found yourself in a large square hall, the ceiling supported by pillars, and above the mantelpiece was an escutcheon



W. Hamm, 1876

FAIRFAX HOUSE.
(From a water colour by Walter Hamm.)

Fairfax House, Mortlake

bearing the date 1620. All the rooms were wainscoted, but the oak panels of the drawing-room had been adorned with a coat of pink and cream paint, whilst another touch of modernity was noticeable in the gas brackets.

At the back of the house was an avenue of "immemorial elms," whose lower branches swept the turf on the lawn, in which were cut out several large beds, full of beautiful rose bushes. Beyond this stretched the kitchen garden, which boasted a fine old mulberry tree, three long asparagus beds, apricot and cherry trees, which clambered up to the top of the old mossgrown walls, currant and gooseberry bushes and beds of herbs bordered with edgings of box, more than a foot high.

My husband was tremendously fascinated by this relic of a past day. He took two or three artist friends there, and they all rambled over the place, and raved about it. At last it was decided we were to become its tenants.

I am afraid I never took very kindly to the old mansion. Of course, on a bright sunny day it was idyllic; but, when the winter months came round, with their long dull evenings, when the children were asleep, and my husband on tour, my only companion being the nursery governess (if I except the army of rats who executed their autumn manœuvres in the wainscot), I then felt that a much more common-

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

place residence would have suited me better. It was difficult, too, to conduct it with anything like economy. It took tons of coal to keep it dry and warm, and our coal bills were awful to contemplate.

The house lacked one ancient item, however. It had no ghost ! This was a great comfort to me, on the servants' account, for hysterics in the kitchen are by no means pleasant. For myself, I have no respect for ghosts. They are so silly and irrational. Of course there have been occasions when ghosts were justified in frightening and annoying people. Julius Caesar, for instance, had a bitter grudge against Brutus, but nothing could justify the shade of Anne Boleyn promenading the corridors of Hampton Court Palace during the last century. The people who were then living there, never did her any harm, for they never knew her. Then, why terrify them ? If her nocturnal promenades had taken place around the royal bedchamber where her liege lord was peacefully reposing by the side of one of his numerous wives, the thing would have been comprehensible, but neither history nor tradition has ever hinted that the tyrannical and obese monarch's slumbers were marred by that ghostly visitor. On the contrary, she remained inactive for a century or two, and then recovered motion, in order to frighten the Georgians and Victorians

Tour of 'Sardanapalus'

who had nothing whatever to do with her troubles.¹ So, how is it possible for any intelligent person to respect a ghost who behaves in so unreasonable a manner?

With the autumn began the tour of *Sardanapalus*. It was received with great acclamation and considerable enthusiasm in the larger towns, the conflagration being hailed as a wonderful piece of stage mechanism. But alas! the large towns only number some five or six, and a tour embraces eighteen or twenty. In the smaller towns it failed to attract the multitude, the story did not appeal to them. The Greek slave "Myrrah," in spite of her heroic love, her intense devotion and her magnificently poetic language, only appeared to the Mrs. Grundys as a young woman who was "no better than she should be." The profits that were gained in the principal cities were mostly absorbed in the losses of the smaller ones, and at the end of the tour my husband found himself but little better off than when he started.

In the meantime, the scheme for the new Opera House on the Embankment was progressing.

¹ Since writing the above I am told that during the last few months the ghostly visitor has again been seen, this time uttering cries of lamentation. The authorities have been taking some liberties with the Royal Moat to which the lady evidently objects.—A. H. C.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

The site had been secured, and the work of excavating had commenced, so that for us there was a speck of sunshine in the distance.

I then accepted, from John Coleman, who was taking *his* production of *Henry the Fifth* on tour, an offer to play Chorus, but that, too, came to an untimely end. At the termination of the first four weeks (played to disastrous business), the remaining dates were cancelled and I returned home, minus a portion of my salary.

A few months after came another trouble. The excavations for the new Opera House were found, one morning, flooded by the Thames. Then the necessary apparatus was set up, and pumping operations began. This costly and disheartening work went on week after week, but, just as they were nearing the end of their labours, and were looking forward to the resumption of the work of laying the foundations, the river, one night, again burst in, and the whole of the workings were once more flooded. Colonel Mapleson then, in sheer despair, abandoned the entire scheme, and part of the extension of Scotland Yard now stands upon the site.

I need not say what a bitter disappointment this was to us. Our boys came back from Germany, having completed their three years' schooling there, and our household now num-

'Henry the Eighth' at Manchester

bered eleven. We began to look for a tenant for Fairfax House, some one who would take the remainder of the lease off our hands. Things were looking somewhat gloomy, and we felt that retrenchment must be the order of the day.

Before this wished-for person turned up, however, a visitor came, a gentleman who represented the proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Manchester. He was empowered to treat with my husband for the production of *Henry the Eighth*, himself to play the part of Wolsey. The engagement was to extend to thirteen weeks in Manchester, and two in Liverpool. They had engaged Miss Genevieve Ward for the part of Katherine, consequently I was not required. Two or three months after the termination of this contract, my husband started for New York to produce *Sardanapalus* for Messrs. Jarrett and Palmer (the purchasers of *Richard the Third* and *Henry the Fifth*). They had made him an offer for the whole of the scenery, dresses and effects, which had been accepted.

It was upon his return from America that we found the person who was anxious and willing to become the tenant of Fairfax House, and having ourselves come across a pretty villa on the Terrace at Barnes (at £50 a year less rent), we packed up our goods and chattels, and left

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

our ancient residence. Two years later Fairfax House was burned to the ground.

Shortly after we had taken possession of our new home, I was engaged by Mr. Phelps to play Katherine of Aragon to his Wolsey, at four *matinées*, two at the Gaiety Theatre, one at the Crystal Palace, and one at the Standard Theatre in Shoreditch.

Whilst at Fairfax House, my husband promised that we would dine with Charles Reade at his house at Knightsbridge, but when the day arrived, he found that a most important business appointment prevented him from going. I therefore went alone, with apologies for his absence. The only other guests were George Augustus Sala, and his wife (his first wife), a handsome, dark-eyed woman. Mrs. Seymour (Charles Reade's lady housekeeper) took the head of the table. After dinner, when we were in the drawing-room, Mrs. Seymour said, with some pride: "Do you know I have taken to carpentering, and have been mending up all the furniture?" Going to a cabinet, she brought out a mahogany box, which contained a miniature set of carpenter's tools, and drawing out a small saw, she made a lunge at Sala, in the manner of a rapier, saying, "Every woman her own Sawyer!" Sala, as he parried the thrust, said, "Sawyer Tranquille!"

Charles Reade

When I was on the point of starting for America, two years later, I wrote to Charles Reade, asking if he could give me any letters of introduction, and received the following reply—

19 Albert Gate,
Knightsbridge,
August 29.

DEAR MRS. CALVERT,

I am sorry to say I can be of no service to you in the U.S.

Both managers and actors in that country have always pillaged me in the way of Piracy, or else robbed me and defrauded me in contracts with singular heartlessness and ingratitude. I am in friendly communication with not one of them except Mr. Booth, in whose hands you are safe.

Wishing you success with the public, and advising you to fly the country as soon as you have done with Mr. Booth,

I am yours very truly,

CHARLES READE.

At another time I wrote to him for his autograph for a boyish friend of mine, suggesting that, to delight the lad, he might add, "It is never too late to mend." He replied—

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

DEAR MRS. CALVERT,

Don't assist youths in the collection of autographs. Let this be the last. "It is never too late to mend!"

Yours sincerely,

CHAS. READE.

Apropos of autograph hunters, by whom public people are persecuted, their requests are usually couched in a somewhat terse and businesslike manner, such as, "Madame, May I request the favour of your autograph to add to my collection?" It is not often that one receives such a florid and exaggerated missive as the following, which came to me at the Prince's Theatre—

18 — Square,
London.

November 18, 1875.

MADAM,

The well-merited fame you have acquired for being a highly Distinguished Artiste, and the happy fugitive moments I have profitably spent, in attending and listening to your admirable performances whenever opportunities offer themselves for me to do so, have long inspired me with the desire to enrich my valuable collection of autographs of celebrated and useful personages with a specimen of your writing, signed, either in the form of a letter, or by

2 Albert Terrace

Kemptown.

April 16

Dear Sir,

I am always at home
in the evening. but tomorrow
morning I must go to 32
Demond St. Pursue Space
to make researches.

You must always be welcome
to me. but I have nothing
to offer but empty plays.

The rumour is in course I
have forewarn dramatic
composition for six months
to come.

Yours truly
Charles Reade

FACSIMILE LETTER FROM CHARLES READE.

Charles Reade

quotation, but I have hitherto been somewhat reluctant to apply direct, for fear of displeasing you. May I venture to beg one of you? And, should I be so successful as to obtain it, I shall consider it as if a precious gem were bestowed on me.

I have the honour to be, Madam,

Your very humble servant,

A—— V——.

The last time that I saw Charles Reade was when, some years later, and only a few months after Mrs. Seymour's death, I called upon him one day with my youngest daughter. He was about to produce a play at the Adelphi, and I thought he might possibly be able to give her a small part in it. After we had conversed a few minutes, the door opened, and a maid came into the room with a tray, upon which was tea, with *two* cups and saucers. She laid it upon the table and left the room. I naturally thought he was going to offer my daughter and myself a cup of tea; but, to my great surprise, he suddenly stopped speaking, rose with a vacant look upon his face, and held out his hand, signifying good-bye. And as we left the house I remembered having heard that ever since the death of Mrs. Seymour her place at the table had always been laid.

It was some time in February 1879 that my

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

husband was fulfilling an engagement at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Birmingham, when Mr. Flower was announced. Mr. Flower was the generous donor of a large plot of land (as well as a most liberal subscriber to the Fund) upon which was erected the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, which was to be inaugurated in the following April. He was also Mayor of the ancient town. His object in calling was to ask if I could play the Queen in *Hamlet* at the approaching inauguration.

"Of course, Mr. Calvert," he said, "I should have been only too pleased and proud if I could have had your valuable assistance as well; but, as you are no doubt aware, Mr. Barry Sullivan some time ago volunteered most generously to play Benedick and Hamlet—there was no part left worthy of your talent and position."

"My dear Mr. Flower," was the answer, "you have done so much for the cause I love, that if I had only been at liberty that week, I would have played anything, even the Second Grave-digger, to show my appreciation of your efforts. But I am due in Glasgow with my company on that date. My wife, however, will be at liberty, and I know she will be delighted to be with you."

Mr. Flower then said that I was to consider myself his guest, adding: "I shall not be able to

The Memorial Theatre, Stratford

offer Mrs. Calvert a room in my house, as every available inch has been allotted long ago, but I have taken a house close by for such of my guests as I cannot otherwise accommodate, and, of course, she will come over to Avonbank for all her meals, and stay there as long as she chooses."

And so, on Saturday, April the 22nd, I went down to Stratford, and saw that glorious old town for the first time. The Mayor's carriage was waiting for me at the station, and the station-master was most courteous. To my amazement he said to a porter standing by, "Here, Shakespeare, take charge of this lady's luggage." I afterwards encountered other Shakespeares in the town, but at first, I must say, it came upon me like a shock. And then I was driven through the streets, profusely decorated with flags and evergreens, to the old mansion where once lived John Hall, who married Shakespeare's daughter. It was now used as a Ladies' School, but the proprietress had given her pupils a fortnight's holiday, so that she could place the house at the disposal of the Mayor.

And what a delightful experience! To live in the house where Shakespeare and his Anne had crossed the threshold to greet the newly married couple. That night, as I ascended the broad staircase with its carved balustrade,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

and entered my oak-panelled bedroom, all sorts of memories seemed to float upon the air, and when I lay down in the large four-poster, a line from Keats's "Eve of St. Agnes" came vividly before me—

"And Madeline asleep, in lap of legends old."

The next day, Sunday, we were driven out to Shottery, and spent a delightful morning in Anne Hathaway's cottage and garden, and after dinner at the Mayor's we all assembled at the Parish Church to hear the "Birthday Sermon," as it is called. The church was crowded with visitors, most of whom had come long distances, and the interesting and scholarly sermon was preached by the Rev. Stopford Brooke, a shining light in the ecclesiastical world, who told me afterwards that in the presence of so many fine elocutionists, he never felt so nervous in his life before.

The following day was a busy one. In the first place there was a rehearsal at the theatre of *Much Ado about Nothing* (Barry Sullivan was the Benedick and Helen Faucit the Beatrice), and then a grand banquet at the Town Hall. I was not concerned with the rehearsal, and went across to Avonbank during the morning—to sit with Mrs. Flower, who was an invalid, and compelled to receive her guests reclining on a couch.

A relative of hers, Miss Nina Paget, the

Waiting for the Mayor

pleasure of whose friendship I had known for some years before, was there to assist her in doing the honours. The time arrived for our departure, but no Mr. Flower! The carriages were waiting, and, of course, the Mayor was the most important person in the procession—to start without him was impossible. We knew that he had gone over to the theatre, but the rehearsal had been finished for some time. At last he appeared, and as the guests filed into the hall, and the carriages were driving up—Mrs. Flower, Miss Paget and myself alone remaining in the room, Mr. Flower spoke hurriedly and in an undertone: “You’ll scarcely believe it, Mrs. Calvert, but this is what has kept me. As Miss Faucit is here for only one night, I ventured to have the green-room fitted up for her as a dressing-room, and my wife sent a few things across to make it look pretty. Barry Sullivan after the rehearsal happened to look in and see it. He said, ‘What’s all this?’ ‘Miss Faucit’s dressing-room, sir.’ ‘Oh then, take my compliments to Mr. Flower, and say that unless *my* dressing-room is arranged the same way I don’t appear to-night!’ And so I had to remain to give orders about some furniture, and you, my dear [addressing his wife], must send across silver candlesticks, vases of flowers, and a lace pincushion for Mr. Barry Sullivan”!!

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Then we left for the Town Hall. The banquet was a very grand affair. I append a copy of the menu. There was a tremendous amount of speech-making—with a vote of thanks and cheers for the Mayor. It was a most brilliant scene; Gainsborough's beautiful picture of David Garrick was looking down upon us.

At night came the opening of the New Theatre. It is needless to say that it was crowded to its fullest capacity, but Mr. Flower had very kindly retained two seats for Miss Paget and myself, Mrs. Flower being incapacitated from attending. It is also needless to write of the enthusiasm with which the play was received.

The next day, the Birmingham newspapers gave long columns of description and criticism, but whilst they bestowed lavish praise upon Helen Faucit's fine performance of Beatrice, they dismissed the Benedick with a few lines of faint commendation, one journal stating: "Mr. Sullivan played the part of Benedick in a manner that would, no doubt, have been highly acceptable to an East End London audience." As Barry Sullivan had been a liberal contributor to the Memorial Theatre Fund—and was also playing gratuitously at these performances—this was, to say the least, ungrateful.

These unkind press notices may have accounted to a large extent for the very irritable

BANQUET

AT
OPENING OF THE

Shakespeare Memorial Theatre



STRATFORD-ON-AVON,

April 23rd, 1879.

C. W. BOURNE, - Purveyor, ...
DUDLEY.

W. HYATT, PRINTER, DUDLEY.

BIBB OF FARE.

Salmon, with Mayonaise Sauce.

- “The salmon’s tail.”—*Othello*, 2, 1. Sweet fish.—*Cymbeline*, 4, 2.
“To sauce thy dishes.”—*Timon of Athens*, iv, 3.

Boar’s Head.

- “The Boar’s head.”—ii *Henry* iv, 2, 4.
“Fear you the boar, and so go unprovided.”—*Richard* iii, 3, 2.

Sirloins and Beef a-la-mode.

- “A piece of beef and mustard.”—*Taming of the Shrew*, 4, 3.
“As pretty a piece of flesh as any.”—*Much ado about nothing*, 4, 2.

Fore Quarter of Lamb.

- “No sheep, sweet lamb.”—*Love’s labour lost*, 2, 1.
“Poor innocent lamb.”—*Macbeth*, 4, 1.

Roast Veal.

- “Brutal to kill so capital a calf.”—*Hamlet*, 3, 2.
“His years but young.”—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 2, 4.

Tongues.

- “Keep a good tongue in thy head.”—*Tempest*, 3, 2.

Hams

- “Knight that cowers ‘i’ the hams.”—*Percles*, 4, 3.
“I pray you is not the pig great?”—*Titus Andronicus*, 4, 2.

Mayonaise of Chickens. Roast Chickens, Boiled Chickens.

- “Here’s a fowl without a feather.”—*Comedy of Errors*, 3, 1.
“Alas, poor hurt fowl.”—*Much ado about nothing*, 2, 1.
The Lord have mercy on thee for a hen.”—*All’s well that ends well*, 2, 3.
“The cock, which is the trumpet of the morn.”—*Hamlet*, 1, 1.

Veal and Ham Pies.

“They are both baked in a pie.”—*Titus Andronicus*, v, 3.

Pigeon Pies.

“Some Pigeons, Davy.”—*Henry*, iv, part ii, v. 1.

Lobsters.

“A strange fish.”—*Tempest*, 2, 2.

“Ill shaped fish.”—*Romeo and Juliet*, v. 1.

Lobster Salad Mayonaise Salad. Plain Salad.

“The sauce to meet is eeremony.”—*Macbeth*, 3, 4.

“There is a sauce for it.”—*Henry* iv, v. 1.

Cabinet Puddings. Tartlets. Cheese Cakes. Trifles. Jellies. Topsy Cakes. Blanc Mange.

“Blessed Pudding.”—*Othello*, 2, 1.

“Sweets to the sweet.”—*Hamlet*.

“Out, vile jelly.”—*Lear*, 3, 7.

Dessert.

“Taste the fruit.”—*Pericles*, 1, 1.



Barry Sullivan

state of mind in which the tragedian turned up for the rehearsal of *Hamlet* on the following morning. We all felt that we were in for a most uncomfortable time. However, he was fairly amicable with the principals—the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern being his chief victims.

“The topmost note of his compass” was, however, directed against a piece of inanimate furniture, which could not possibly resent it. Mr. Flower, knowing that the theatre was too small to make any lavish display, had taken the greatest pains to have the furniture, hangings, etc., archæologically correct, and as *real* as possible. There was a beautiful little *prie-Dieu*, of carved wood, touched in with gold and colours. At the top were small white silk curtains, also ornamented with gold, in front of which, suspended by a triple chain, hung a ruby lamp, the light from which fell upon an illuminated Missal lying upon the desk. The whole design was exquisitely artistic and real. It was placed upon the stage for the scene where Ophelia is bidden to “Read upon this book,” and Miss Wallis (the Ophelia) was kneeling before it, when the Hamlet entered. He did not want her there. Her presence detracted from the importance of his “To be, or not to be,” so she had to leave the stage, re-entering at the end of his speech (as used formerly to be done). After she had gone off,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

his eye fell upon the *prie-Dieu*, and he said, "And take that thing away. I don't want it there." It was removed. Then Mr. Flower thought it might be utilized in the scene of the Queen's chamber, so it was placed there, and I was kneeling before it, when the angry Prince rushed in. His eye fell, not on his mother, but upon the unfortunate *prie-Dieu*, and he shouted "Take that d——d thing away and don't let me see it again!" It was again removed to the property room, and the public never saw the beautiful thing.

For the last scene, in which there are many libations, Mr. Flower had consulted a friend, who was an F.A.S., and together they had evolved some Scandinavian drinking-horns. They were real horns, mounted on brass claws, and were very striking. Sullivan looked at them with a contemptuous eye, and said, "I don't care about these. After the rehearsal, I will tell the property-master what I want." And after rehearsal a man was sent by the next train to Birmingham to borrow from one of the theatres there the dirty Dutch-metalled papier-maché goblets which had been used in *Hamlet* from time immemorial.

The next day *Hamlet* was performed at a *matinée*, and as I never saw Barry Sullivan again, and shall not, therefore, have to revert to him, I will add a few words, and then re-

Barry Sullivan

quiescat in pace. There is no doubt that, in his youth, he was an admirable actor. He had a fine presence, and a powerful voice, which he used from its lowest note to the top of its compass. With the enthusiasm of youth, he had studied his parts, inch by inch. Every movement of the body, every inflexion of the voice was—studied! At that time, he was a success, and a great one—and there he stopped. The years rolled by, many blemishes of the old school of acting were reformed, not “indifferently,” but “altogether,” but Barry Sullivan stood still, a thing fatal to a student of any art. He played *Hamlet* at forty-five exactly as he had played it at twenty-eight. The same stilted movements, the same meaningless inflexions, which had grown with age into mere mechanism, for the youthful enthusiasm was no longer there. For many years before his death, London absolutely refused to accept him. He tried one or two theatrical enterprises, but they resulted disastrously. Upon the Irish public, however, he retained his hold to the very last; and I remember, when visiting Dublin, some years after the Stratford affair, Michael Gunn, the proprietor of the Gaiety Theatre there, saying to me, with something of amazement in his tone: “Do you know that Irving’s receipts are fast catching up to Barry Sullivan’s?”

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

And now, to hark back to Stratford. After the *matinée* of *Hamlet*, I went over to Avonbank to dinner, and was sitting beside the couch of my invalid hostess, when Mr. Stopford Brooke was announced. He came in with a beaming face, "Oh, Mrs. Flower, what a delightful afternoon! What a glorious performance! But who was the lady who played the Queen?" Mrs. Flower said, laughingly, "Here she is, Mr. Brooke." And the brilliant preacher made me very happy by saying some kindly and gracious things, and by afterwards taking me in to dinner.

That evening we had some music in the drawing-room. The Queen's Harpist (I forget his name) and a celebrated lady harpist were among the guests, and they played some exquisite duets.

So ended the last happy evening that I was to know for many a long month to come.

CHAPTER IX

MY HUSBAND'S ILLNESS AND DEATH

IN the morning I had a letter from my husband, who was in Glasgow with his company. He was not well. His cough (asthmatic) was troubling him very much, and he had partly lost his voice—had been unable to play the night before, but hoped, at the end of the week, to reappear. He said he would be very glad when I returned, but that I was on no account to break my engagement.

By the next post came a letter from kind-hearted John Coleman. He had been sitting up with my husband the previous night, and thought it only right that I should know how ill he was. His cough was almost incessant, and accompanied by terrible nervous prostrations. As he had spoken of my return, and was looking forward to it, Coleman urged me to come as soon as it was possible. *Hamlet* was to be repeated on the Friday, so I took both letters to Mr. Flower, and asked him what was to be done. Upon inquiring, he found that Mrs. Luigi Lablache, the lady engaged for the Player Queen, had also played Queen

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Gertrude. In less than an hour I had packed the one box I had brought with me. The Mayor's carriage was at the door to drive me to the station, and I started for Glasgow. I found the poor invalid better than I had hoped for, but very weak. He told me how John Coleman had sat by his bedside, and narrated odd stories of provincial theatres and actors until the patient forgot his troubles, and actually laughed with him. I saw, however, that any idea of his reappearance either that week or the next was hopeless.

He and his company were announced for the following week at the "Princess's," Edinburgh. The manager, hearing of his condition, came over to Glasgow, and said that he could not receive the company unless he or I was on the bill, and so it was arranged that I should play in a first piece. I chose Tom Taylor's *Nine Points of the Law*, and every night that week I journeyed to Edinburgh, played the part of Mrs. Smylie, caught the nine o'clock train back to Glasgow, and sat by my husband's bedside until, at half-past eleven, his male nurse came to stay with him through the night.

The week at Edinburgh was the termination of the tour, and the company was disbanded, so that he had no further responsibility on that score, and by the end of another week

Our Return Home

the patient had recovered sufficiently to warrant the doctor's permission to return home.

I wrote to my good friend Dr. Lane (who had retired from Sudbrooke and now lived in Harley Street) saying that we were coming to London by the night train, that we should arrive about six a.m., that I hoped he would sleep the greater part of the journey, but that I was terribly anxious about our arrival at Euston, and should be deeply grateful if he would meet us. When we arrived, he was there, our dear kind friend, and a little chat upon the platform put us both in good spirits. As we got into a cab my husband said to him, "Oh, I shall be all right as soon as I get home again," and we started for Waterloo. I remember that as we passed through Covent Garden that bright May morning the flower-hawkers with their barrows lined every street. There were scores of them, buying their wares in the market and loading their small vehicles with every kind of flower—roses, fuchsias, lilies—a feast of colour and beauty. It was a sight new to us both, and to both it gave a few moments' pleasure.

Upon our reaching home, Dr. Marshall, who had attended my husband for over two years, was again summoned. Then came weeks of alternate despair and hope. At times, unusual energy and mental activity would

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

come—he would write business letters and discuss future plans, but, following on these, were periods of intense nervous prostration, a weariness of life, and a craving for release.

On June 12 came the Peace he had so often prayed for!

“O, let him pass! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this rough world
Stretch him out longer.”

The words were not more appropriate to the poor stricken Lear than they were to him!

In deference to his oft-repeated wishes, he was laid by the side of the little daughter whom he had so dearly loved. The funeral took place at Brooklands Cemetery, Manchester, and was attended by an immense concourse of people who had assembled to pay their respects to the man they loved and admired so much.

A London paper described the scene in these words—

“Between Manchester and Brooklands Cemetery, where lie the mortal remains of Charles Alexander Calvert, no fewer than 50,000 people had assembled to pay their friend and teacher the last tribute of respect in their power to offer. It is in this peaceful spot that he rests, after a long and honourable

The Funeral Oration

life, the effects of which happily yet remain, and may be distinctly traced in many of the theatres to which he had at different times devoted his attention.”

The funeral oration at the graveside, which was quite impromptu, was delivered by the Rev. Paxton Hood, and was as follows—

“The frame which is now consigned to its grave must have been much beloved in its frequent appearances before men and women to have commanded this mighty audience this afternoon to tender the last tribute of affection and regard. It is very true, if I am not impertinent in saying so, that we come to bury Calvert, not to praise him. He must have had a large hold upon the hearts and affections of men and women, not only here, but very likely throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire too. That he was much beloved and much honoured, surely this audience before me attests and witnesses. It is often suggested that there is a sharp line of demarcation between the profession of the minister and the Christian profession of that of the great actor. I don't know why it should be thought so exactly, for it seems to me that whoever he may be who impersonates noble emotions and lofty conceptions—whoever he may be who imparts innocent and cheerful

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

mirth, must be regarded as a great public benefactor; and in the memory of this, we may say that a great public benefactor has gone, and gone unexpectedly, from our midst. All genius is from God. The power to interpret great ideas, the power to impersonate noble emotions, no less than the power which expresses them, we are to conceive is derived from God, who is the giver of every great and good gift. We cannot but know that he whom we are interring to-day has really stirred and aroused noble feelings and impressions to the hearts and minds of men. I have had conveyed to my mind also the knowledge while I have been coming here that he was not less a man of religious convictions and religious impressions, although, perhaps, not finding their solution in some of those which are regarded as the ordinary and popular forms of such ideas. However that might be, the mighty impersonator of death is dead. The mighty and masterly tragedian has yielded to that tragedy to which at last we all have to yield, the great tragedy which closes life—death. Through a painful illness, through a complication of painful diseases such as have been described to me, he has found that the best physician is death—death from which we shrink back and shudder all our lives, but which that great spirit whose words he was

The Funeral Oration

so fond of interpreting and quoting has told is

‘ As a lover’s pinch,
Which hurts and is desir’d.’

We leave him here in the midst of this presence of duty, beneath the blue sky, in the midst of the glories and pomp of these trees, with their green and gold, and in the beauty of this sunshine ; but we do not leave him altogether in the grasp of Nature. We do not leave him there at all. Whatever lived of Calvert lives ! It is not possible that the spirit which can stir noble sentiments or express noble thoughts can pass away as something which resolves itself into dust, but as no more. The immortal spirit lives, and I shall believe that through the faith which we have in Jesus Christ our Lord, who says, ‘ Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ’ ; who tells us, or of whom we are told, that it was His province to bring life and immortality to light through His gospel. With these pleasant hopes, with these bright and cheerful sentiments, we now consign to the grave this beloved brother and dear neighbour and townsman of yours, whose last wish was that he should repose in this beautiful cemetery. We leave him here, in the full and assured hope that, as he lives among the spirits yonder in the light and

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

love of the world to come, those who long to meet him again shall meet him on the morrow ! ”

On the gravestone was cut—

“ After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.”

After my husband’s funeral at Brooklands Cemetery, Mr. Alfred Darbyshire, as one of his executors, thought it would be desirable that the Manchester public should have an opportunity of showing respect to his memory, and, at the same time, contributing to the funds of his bereaved family. He therefore consulted with Mr. Tom Taylor, and the result was that they decided to give a benefit performance of *As You Like It*, the various parts to be played by those literary men, musicians, and artists who had been connected with him during his lifetime.

Lady Martin (Helen Faucit) very generously offered to leave her retirement and once more play Rosalind. As Miss Wallis was also desirous of playing it, it was decided to give the performance on two nights instead of one, with Miss Faucit on the first night, and Miss Wallis on the other. After all the selections had been made, revised, etc., the east finally decided upon was as follows (copied from a circular published by the Benefit Committee)—

Public Benefit in Manchester

CALVERT BENEFIT DEMONSTRATION.

Theatre Royal, Manchester, October 1st and 2nd, 1879.

“AS YOU LIKE IT.”

PROGRAMME.

The Address, written by H. M. Acton, Esq., will be spoken by

Mrs. John Duffield,

Who has kindly undertaken the duty in the absence of
The Hon. Lady Sebright.

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY,

“As You Like It.”

Dramatis Personae—

Duke (living in exile)		B. Lee, Esq.
Duke Frederiek (Brother to the Duke and usurper of his dominions)		Henry J. Jennings, Esq. (<i>Birmingham Mail</i>).
First Lord	Lords attending the Duke in his banishment.	J. D. Watson, Esq., S.P.W.C.
Second Lord		John Hollingshead, Esq.
Third Lord		G. Du Maurier, Esq. (<i>Punch</i>).
Fourth Lord		R. Watson, Esq.
Fifth Lord		W. Calder, Esq.
Amiens (with songs)		Arthur Matthison, Esq.
Jaques		A. Darbyshire, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.
Le Beau		C. Napier Hemy, Esq.
Charles	(The Wrestler)	R. J. Davies Colley, Esq.
Oliver	Sons of Sir Rowland de Bois.	A. H. Marsh, Esq.
Jaques		W. G. Baxter, Esq.
Orlando		Hon. Lewis Wingfield.
Adam		Tom Taylor, Esq.
Touchstone		Hermann Merivale, Esq.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Corin	}	Shep- herds.	{	Linley Sambourne, Esq.
Sylvius				(<i>Punch</i>).
William				Arthur Poole, Esq.
First Forester				John Cavanah, Esq.
Rosalind				Edwin Waugh, Esq.
Rosalind				Miss Wallis. ¹
Rosalind				Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Theo- dore Martin). ²
Celia				Miss Kate Pattison (by kind permission of Messrs. Hare and Kendal).
Phœbe				Miss Emma Toms (Theatre Royal).
Audrey				Mrs. Edward Saker.
				Stage Manager, Mr. E. Edmonds.

Chorus—

Messrs. Downs, Fildes, Boardman, Fairhurst, Fawley, Becket, Allen, Wolsteneroft, Broomhall, Kenyon, Page, Smethurst, Muddiman, Lees, Law, Ruddock, Higson, Hart, Foulkes, Lynch, Dixon, Ray, Walton, Openshaw, Williamson.

Ladies of the Court and Shepherdesses—

Mrs. Juliet Smith, Mrs. Thorpe, Miss Dow, Miss Harlow, Miss Ritchie, Miss Catterall, Miss Lynch, Mrs. Lynch.

Chorus Master, Mr. Yarwood.

Lords attending on Duke Frederick—

Walter Lees, D. Anderson, F. Elkington, W. Humphreys, R. S. Nadin, H. Pagden, R. Daniels.

¹ Wednesday, October 1st.

² Thursday, October 2nd. This is the last time that Lady Martin ever appeared upon the stage.

The Calvert Memorial Performance

Foresters—

W. Adams, A. Marriott, W. H. Rumsey, W. H. Meakin, A. T. Forest, T. Cavanah, J. W. McGowan, J. Marriott, R. Winstanley, D. A. Murray, J. Harwood, J. Roberts, R. Pollitt, J. H. E. Partington, Charles Potter, H. Watkinson, W. Meredith.

MUSIC.

Shakespearean Overture Sir H. Bishop.

The Lorenzo Masque { (Specially composed for the revival of *The Merchant of Venice*) } Arthur Sullivan.

Pageant Music { (Specially composed for the revival of *Henry the Eighth*) } Arthur Sullivan.

Revel Music { (Specially composed for the revival of *Sardanapalus*) } Frederiek Clay.

Musical Director, Mr. J. Crook.

Machinist, Mr. John Byrnes.

Gas Engineer, Mr. J. Watmough.

Conductor of the Orchestra, Mr. Alfred Cellier.

The Theatre placed at the disposal of the Committee by the Lessees—Messrs. Duffield and Lawton.

SCENE.

First, near Oliver's House. Afterwards, partly in the Usurper's Court and in the Forest of Arden.

THE MEMORIAL PROGRAMME

has been specially designed by

H. Staey Marks, Esq., R.A.,

And the original drawing presented by him to the Committee.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

I append the first and last stanzas of the Address which was spoken before the performance on each evening—

“Stalls, pit and gallery thronged, above, below!
What kindly motive prompts this glittering show?
Small need to ask—the sympathetic eye
And saddened smile are quick to make reply.
Beneath this roof, where, many a time, in quest
Of mirthful pastime, eager feet have pressed—
Where you and pleasure have so often met—
You come to-night to pay a generous debt;
To honour one now lowly laid, who bore
The Master’s part in these glad scenes of yore.
He ruled this mimic kingdom, and how well
He swayed its sceptre none like *you* can tell.

.
His claims were these; and if a thought arise
Of feelings based on nearer, homelier ties;
Of her, companion of his struggling days,
Who shared their labour and partook the praise;
Of children whom this hour may spur to fame,
Proud of the pride that decked their father’s name;
Reflect that where the deadliest blow was dealt,
You helped to make the pang less keenly felt;
That while you paid to public worth its due,
A mourning hearth found faithful friends in you;
And think with pleasure ’twas your hands that gave
A wreath of laurel to your favourite’s grave.”

The house was packed to suffocation on each occasion, and a considerable sum of money was realized. The enthusiasm of the large audiences was unbounded, and it was a great consolation to me to know the high esteem

The Bishop of Manchester

and affection that the Manchester public entertained towards the man who had spent the best years of his life in their service.

On the very night of the Memorial Performance the Bishop of Manchester, speaking at the Social Science Congress, made the following remarks—

“ In the present state of artistic and literary education, the taste of our people is so coarse and unrefined, that it is almost impossible to prevent their amusements from degenerating into vulgarity and indecency. Mrs. Theodore Martin, with that generosity which is characteristic of her, is this very night performing in the Theatre Royal, as a mark of respect to the memory of the late Mr. Charles Calvert, who did so much, not in Manchester only, but in other provincial towns, to uphold the character of the Stage. I remember well, on one occasion, when I endeavoured to show in public my approbation of his efforts—for which I am afraid I fell into the black books of many sincerely good, but gloomy people—that in acknowledging what I said, he told me what uphill work he found it, and how constantly his aims were defeated by the vicious public taste not only of the lower class alone—which preferred what was indelicate, and prurient, and revolting.”

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Punch, in commenting on this, had the following to say in a paragraph that was headed "A Good Example"—

"If prophets have seldom honour in their own country, still seldomer have artists. When they have, it usually comes when they are dead, and unable to reap the material benefit of it. It is too often with them a case of honour *versus* profit. But one class of artists—actors—usually receive all their honours, and profits, too, in their lifetime. It is rarely that they obtain posthumous honours, and profits to boot. It is still more rare when both come from those for whom the actor-artist has spent himself in efforts less for the advancement of himself than of his art.

"Last week witnessed a memorable example of such rare posthumous recognition of an actor's services to the community among whom and for whom his best labours had been bestowed, in the memorial performances at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in honour of Charles Calvert, prematurely cut off, and for the benefit of his widow and family. He was less famous as an actor—though as an actor he had many and rare merits—than as a manager. In the latter character he did more for the elevation and development of the higher drama, historical and imaginative, than any

A Generous Tribute from 'Punch'

provincial manager on record, and than any metropolitan managers, except Macready, Charles Kean, and Phelps. The Prince's Theatre, under his direction, was an arena for the tasteful and thoughtful combination of all the arts—scenic, musical, pictorial—which unite with the work of the dramatist to make the stage the meeting-place of all the arts, visible, audible and intellectual. In this way Charles Calvert, in the course of his ten years' management of the Prince's Theatre, did more for the imaginative and artistic education of Manchester and its densely-peopled neighbourhood than any other agency did or could have done.

“Punch may rush in where a bishop has not feared to tread, in paying this honour to his memory. And last week's memorial performance of *As You Like It*, in which Miss Helen Faucit was proud to associate herself with a body of amateur actors, including metropolitan and provincial notables in art and literature, is not less worthy of record as a tribute of artists to an artist than for the active part borne in organizing and conducting it by a committee including the leading citizens of the manufacturing capital. Civic worthies have rarely been so ready to recognize a worthy conception and fulfilment of the educational and intellectual functions of a well-

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

directed stage. Still more rarely bishops. Manchester's civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries are, in Punch's opinion, alike to be congratulated.

“Punch notes this performance for all these reasons, and that he may say, in conclusion, both to bishops, managers, and municipal worthies, ‘Go ye and do likewise.’”

Thus I close this, to me, painful chapter, and set myself the task of recording the experiences that befell me in continuing my professional career without the help and comfort of him whose life I had shared for so many years.

CHAPTER X

HENRY IRVING AND EDWIN BOOTH

SOME weeks later, the newspapers were making the announcement that Mr. Irving's next Shakespearean play at the Lyceum Theatre was to be *Coriolanus*, and I was surprised, one evening, to receive a telegram, asking me to call upon Mr. Irving at the theatre on the following morning. Upon arriving there, I was conducted at once to his room, where I found him evidently awaiting me. He expressed great sympathy with my deep loss, questioned me about my sons, and then, to my surprise, somewhat abruptly,—

“Have you ever played *Volumnia*?”

I answered, No, that it had been my husband's intention to revive *Coriolanus* in Manchester, and that he had been in communication with Alma Tadema respecting its production, but it had been laid aside for some other play, and we had left Manchester without its having been produced.

He then said, in a hesitating manner, “I think I shall be able to offer it to you, but I am not yet quite sure. The fact is, it may not

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be the next play. At all events, I will let you know as soon as I have decided. If I *can* give it to you, I shall be very pleased to do so." To this, he was kind enough to add that he had every confidence in my being a success in it.

Mr. Alfred Darbyshire called upon me the following day to ask me what had taken place at the interview, and I learned from him the following particulars.

It appeared that a day or two previous he was at Holly Lodge, Highgate, the seat of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, where he was about to make some important alterations for the Baroness. During a conversation, she spoke of my husband's career, and, finding that Mr. Darbyshire was one of the executors, also questioned him concerning my position.

She then said, "Well, I suppose the best thing that could be done for Mrs. Calvert would be to give her a good engagement in a London Theatre." To this he warmly acquiesced.

"Do you know," continued the Baroness, "if Mr. Irving has yet engaged a lady for *Volumnia*?" Mr. Darbyshire believed that he had not.

"Then, will you see him, and say that if he has not done so, and will engage Mrs. Calvert for the part, I shall take it as a personal favour?"

The Baroness Burdett-Coutts

Mr. Darbyshire carried out her kind intentions, and was with Mr. Irving when the telegram was sent to me with the appointment for the following day. After that, I waited, and waited, but no further communication reached me, and, some weeks later, I read in the morning papers that the play was not to be produced. It was set aside for *The Merchant of Venice*, for which, however, Mr. Irving kindly engaged my second son William for a small part.

Some years elapsed before *Coriolanus* was produced, and then Miss Ellen Terry was the Volumnia. The play, however, could not be ranked as one of Mr. Irving's successes. It had been deferred too long, and he was no longer capable of portraying, physically, the proud and fiery young patrician.

In September 1881, I read with a thrill of pleasure the following gracious words spoken by Sir Henry Irving at a banquet which had been tendered to him in Manchester. Sir Henry said—

“I lived here for five years, and wherever I look—to the right or to the left, to the north or to the south—I always find some remembrance, some memento of those five years—youthful aspirations, youthful hopes, battles fought, battles won, battles lost, early ambitions, and many things that fill my mind with pleasure, and sometimes with pain. But there

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

is one association connected with my life that probably is unknown to but few in this room. That is an association with a friend, which had much to do, I believe, with the future course of our two lives. When I tell you that our communions were very grave, and very deep, that our friendship was a strong one, and for months and years we fought together, and worked together to the best of our power, and with the means we had then, to give effect to the art we were practising; when I tell you we dreamt at night of what might be done, but was not done, and patted each other on the back and said, 'Well, old fellow, perhaps the day will come when you may have a little more than sixpence in your pocket'; when I tell you that that man was well known to you, and that his name was Calvert, you will understand the nature of my associations with Manchester. I have no doubt you will be able to trace in my own career, and the success I have had, the benefit of the communion I had with him!"

There arrived one morning a summons from English and Blackmore, the well-known theatrical agents, and, upon going to their place of business, I received an offer to accompany Edwin Booth upon a provincial tour through the English provinces. I was to play the parts of the Queen in *Hamlet*, Emilia in *Othello*, and

Thank you
much for
the lecture
which is
interesting
to me.

CEUM THEATRE.

Dear Mr. [Name]

I have not
forgotten your
communication
& which you
made. I have
been very
regretful to
have commenced
when I can
do so only just
in time.
Yours truly
Henry Irving

FACSIMILE LETTER FROM SIR HENRY IRVING.

Edwin Booth

Francesca Bentivoglio in *The Fool's Revenge*. My eldest daughter was to accompany me, and play Jessica, and one or two small parts. Terms were agreed upon, and the contract was to be forwarded in the course of a day or two. I waited for several days, but no contract, and then came a startling rumour that Edwin Booth had yielded to the entreaties of his wife, who had been attacked with a serious illness, had cancelled all his English dates, and was taking her back to America.

This was a cruel disappointment, and I wrote to the Agents, inquiring if the rumour was true, and saying that if it were so, some indemnity ought surely to be paid to the people who were already engaged. The answer came that Mr. Booth had certainly cancelled his English tour, but that they believed a scheme was being formed, of which I should probably hear more in a day or two.

After a few more days' delay, I went one morning, in answer to a wire, to the Continental Hotel in Waterloo Place, and there met Mr. Henry E. Abbey, the well-known American manager. He informed me that Mr. Booth's tour would be transferred to the United States, and would be under his (Mr. Abbey's) direction; that he was prepared to carry out my contract in that country if I cared to go; that the season would be for forty weeks instead of fourteen,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

and that the American salary would be nearly treble my English one.

I immediately accepted, and at once began my preparations. My eldest sons were now working for themselves on various tours, and I had placed the three youngest children at school, where I now made arrangements for them to stay during their Christmas holidays. I was able, too, to let my house furnished for the nine months that I should be absent, and therefore started for my third visit to America under good auspices.

My *Lady Fortune* having endowed Edwin Booth with great histrionic talent, a handsome and poetic appearance, and the power of making money and troops of friends, evidently considered she had done enough, and, in almost all else, practically deserted him. The death of his first wife, in the early years of their married life, leaving him with a little baby girl; the loss of his entire fortune in Booth's Theatre in New York, where his easy-going nature led to his being fleeced on all sides; a terrible carriage accident, which almost shattered his right arm; the awful national calamity by which his brother was branded as a murderer and hunted to his death; a nature, too, which in some respects was sadly lacking in strength and toughness of fibre, combined to render Edwin Booth, like Shakespeare's Don John, a

New York
Hotel Brunswick
June 2^d - '80

Mrs Calvert

Dear Madam -

As I
have made no ar-
rangement for my
appearance in Eng-
land I can offer
nothing - promise
nothing.

My visit to
Europe is to be chiefly
for rest & recrea-
tion, though I hope,

of course, to act
there before I re-
turn to America.

I have not yet even
negotiated with any
English manager —
nor shall I do so
until long after
my arrival in
England.

With kind regards
Very truly yours

Frederick
L. L.

Edwin Booth

man "of a very melancholy disposition." It was very seldom that we saw him smile.

He was a man, too, singularly free from all the petty jealousies of art, whose hand was ever open to the claims of the distressed and unsuccessful. Several instances of his kindness of heart occur to me. One night, owing to our late arrival, salaries were paid in a hurried and unceremonious manner during the performance, and my daughter had her remuneration pushed into her hand as she was going on the stage. It consisted of a loose bundle of dollar bills, which she thrust into the neck of her dress, and then forgot that they were there. Later, upon undressing, she found that a number of them had disappeared. They had dropped somewhere about the wings. Search was made, but it was useless. The loss came to the ears of Mr. Booth, who at once sent for her and placed the sum in her hands. Seeing her hesitation at accepting it, he said, "Take it, my child; it is not of the slightest importance to me. I give away more than that almost every day of my life." I may add that the person who found the notes afterwards acknowledged the momentary fit of abstraction, and refunded the money, which was at once returned to Mr. Booth.

Another instance! A young man who hailed from Akron, Ohio, had joined the company.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

His name has, for the present, escaped me. However, Mr. Barnard Baldersville will answer the purpose. He had, in some way, been connected with a newspaper office—also with an amateur dramatic society there—and when he exchanged the midnight oil for the seven-to-eleven footlights, his career was watched with the greatest anxiety. His connection with Edwin Booth's company was, of course, regarded as a stepping-stone to world-wide and undying fame. Copies of the *Akron Sentinel* occasionally were seen in the green-room, with "pars" heavily underlined with pencil marks, somewhat in the style of the following—

"Mr. Edwin Booth opened on Monday at Buffalo, to a brilliant and enthusiastic audience. The play was *The Merchant of Venice*, and we are pleased to record the fact that our rising and successful young townsman, Mr. Barnard Baldersville, made a big hit in the part of Salanio."

At last we reached Akron, where we stayed for one night only, the piece being *Hamlet*. Mr. Baldersville, under ordinary conditions, played two parts—Francisco (who speaks the opening lines) and the First Actor, who does not appear till the middle of the play. Mr. Baldersville, however, represented to Mr. Booth that it would be more conducive to his dignity if he only appeared in one part, and he was

An Adventure in Akron, Ohio

accordingly released from that of Francisco. At length the eventful evening came. The theatre was crowded—the play progressed—and the First Actor made his appearance—! Heavens, what a reception! Hamlet was practically nowhere, and sat patiently whilst “our young and talented townsman” stood bowing his acknowledgements. At last the tumult subsided, and the play went on; but, at the close of the First Actor’s long, descriptive speech, another roar of applause culminated in an immense floral trophy being handed up over the footlights. Mr. Baldersville began, I fancy, to agree with Talleyrand that *trop de zèle* was sometimes an objectionable quality, and declined to take it. So it remained there till the end of the act, when Booth, good-naturedly, led Mr. Baldersville on with him in front of the act drop, and motioned to him to take away his flowery compliment.

The gentleman who played Horatio wore a long flaxen-haired wig. One night, when the heat was very great, having ten minutes or so to wait, he went up to his dressing-room and threw it off. In the midst of some animated discussion, he was “called” hurriedly, went on the stage rapidly, and noticed Booth’s look of wonder. How he played that act, he says, he never knew, and when it was over, he expected some sharp reprimand. Booth, however, merely

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

said, " Well, Mr. —, I've heard of people turning white in a single night, but that's no reason why they should change from flaxen to dark brown in ten minutes ! "

This easy-going quality, however, though admirable in some respects, is a dangerous one for an actor-manager. It leads to careless, disjointed performances. Booth troubled himself in no way about scenes with which he was not concerned, nor about any costumes, save his own, which were absolutely correct. And when he played *Hamlet* in Boston (some years later—when I was on tour with Miss Mary Anderson), I went over one night to see it. Salvini was the ghost—and looked superb in his suit of Scandinavian armour and winged helmet. The rest of the company had as usual dresses of every conceivable age and country, several of them wearing the Stuart pointed lace collars, whilst Queen Gertrude had a purple dress with white satin ball slippers, which were very much *en evidence*. It can easily be understood that Sir Henry Irving's Shakespearcan representations, where everything was " perfect to a shoe tie," were in most American towns a revelation.

Our tour lasted forty weeks, and was, I believe, the first that Mr. Booth had ever taken which included one-night performances. At one portion of it we visited fourteen towns in

Edwin Booth

three weeks, and, of course, lived chiefly on the railroad cars. This, however, was not so trying as many might imagine. Our cars being specially retained for us—under the care of a conductor who took charge of them—we could leave all superfluous articles, needlework, books, papers, etc., there in safety, drive to a hotel, obtain a meal, go to the theatre, and after the performance return to the cars, where we found beds made up, and all straight and tidy.

A large handsome car was sumptuously fitted for Mr. Booth and his daughter Edwina. It furnished sleeping accommodation for two or three servants, Miss Booth's maid (an old coloured woman named Bessie, who had been her nurse, and who had never left their service), two cooks, etc. It contained ample space for eight or ten people to dine, and during the journeys the members of the company were several times invited there in detachments. The invitations were usually brought us by Bessie.

A little card lies before me as I write—

Mr. and Miss E. B.

will be pleased to have

Mrs. and Miss C. dine with them at five.

Two picnics were also given by Mr. Booth to his company during my stay. The first was

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

in the month of January—not a time suggestive of picnics—but then we were at Galveston, on the Gulf of Mexico, and the peas were in flower, and the roses in full bloom, and our picnic was held on a lonely part of the sea-shore. The second was only a few weeks later in a pine forest in Alabama.

Apropos of this same railroad car, Mr. Booth related the following to us one morning—

“ A number of people collected round my ear last night after the performance, and I heard this—

‘ That’s Booth’s car.’

‘ D’ye think he’s there ? ’

‘ No, I guess he’s not back yet.’

‘ What did you think of his acting to-night ? ’

‘ Oh, I was dreadfully disappointed ; and as for my wife, she didn’t care for it at all—she says *she don’t call that acting.*’ ”

Poor Bessie, whilst at Philadelphia, suffered from a “ raging tooth,” and Booth, knowing it would be difficult to abstract, placed a \$10 bill in her hand and told her to go to one of the first-class dentists. She returned at the end of four hours. She had been to five of the most skilful men, who all declined to help her on account of her race. One of them said, in a kindly tone, “ I am really very sorry for you, but you see, if by any chance it was known

Edwin Booth

that my instruments had touched a coloured woman, I should lose the whole of my practice.” Booth added, “ And this is Philadelphia, Mrs. Calvert. The City of Brotherly Love. The City that during the war was amongst the loudest to proclaim the equality of the coloured race ! ”

Booth was an inveterate smoker, and at nights in his dressing-room never laid down his cigar until the last possible moment. His dresser (who had been with him for years) knew every line of all the scenes his master was engaged in, and would watch the play from the wings, timing each summons so exactly that Booth was just able to reach the wing for his entrance. After each scene, Booth walked straight back and resumed his cigar, if only for two minutes. All his exits and entrances were, so far as possible, arranged to suit the side upon which his dressing-room was situated, and varied with the different towns.

Mr. Booth’s carriage accident, to which I have alluded, resulted in a fearfully shrivelled and distorted arm ; and in *Richard the Third* he drew up his sleeve and showed it—as the result of Jane Shore’s witchcraft. A shudder used often to pass round the house, and he said to me, “ And I am often complimented on the way in which it is made up ! ”

An extraordinary performance of *Hamlet* also

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

happened during my engagement. We had reached Waterbury (of watch renown) late in the evening, had a hasty tea at the hotel, and hurried to the theatre. The doors were already open, the theatre filling rapidly, but there was terrible consternation behind the scenes. Our baggage car had, by some mistake, never been unhitched, and was consequently carried on. There we were, without a dress or a property. The local manager was in despair.

Booth said : " We must give them back their money ! "

Local Manager : " But we cannot turn them out, Mr. Booth : hundreds have come up by excursion trains which don't return till 11.30, and they have no place to go to. It is snowing fast, and they must sit here even if they see nothing. Can't you make up an entertainment of recitations ? "

Booth declared that he had never given a recitation in his life, and " should feel like a fool."

At last it was agreed upon that the audience should be appealed to, and if they cared to stay and see *Hamlet* in modern tourist costumes, he would give the first four acts of it. The fifth he could not possibly attempt under the circumstances. So the overture commenced. The ladies ran to their dressing-rooms to divest themselves of their heavy wraps, and to

‘Hamlet’ in Tourist Costumes

obtain complexions better suited to the foot-lights, in the way of soap and water and an extra application of the powder puff, which one lady, fortunately, had in her hand satchel. The First Gravedigger went out into the storm, and purchased some yards of white tulle for scarves for the ladies’ necks. The local management rushed round to collect, from various sources, some chairs, tables, etc., one of the Masonic lodges kindly supplying Hamlet with a sword.

The overture finished, the curtain went up, disclosing, not the battlements of Elsinore, but a modern apartment with the entire company ranged round their chief. He stepped forward and explained matters, saying that he could only suggest that we should go through four acts in our travelling costumes. They could either imagine that we had returned to the Elizabethan custom of acting in ordinary everyday dress, or they might fancy themselves present at a rehearsal which, he knew from experience, so many were anxious to attend. At all events, any persons who desired it, could have their money returned.

Loud cries of “No! No! Go on, Mr. Booth! Play *Hamlet!*” etc., settled the question, and the performance began and was listened to with breathless attention. The company did themselves the justice to play earnestly and con-

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

scientifically, for each felt that the slightest relaxation of the risible muscles would result in disaster, but it required a somewhat powerful effort at self-control when the Play Scene came, and the murdered Player King in coat and trousers was sent to his doom sitting upright on a kitchen chair.

The next morning, before leaving, we visited the Waterbury Watch Manufactory, and one of the partners of the firm, whilst showing us over the works, said: "I would not have missed last night's performance for five hundred dollars—it was a thing that only happens once in a lifetime, and will probably never occur again!"

My tour with Booth enabled me to meet again my sister Clara. It was a sad meeting—we were both widows—and had many painful memories to recall. She was still the leading lady at the Boston Theatre, some of her children residing with her. I was her guest during the four weeks we remained in Boston.

Another incident connected with the Booth tour was that I visited, for the first time, a city whose name had often been mentioned to me by my husband, and which was so closely linked with his family—Baltimore.

George Calvert—a native of Yorkshire—educated at Oxford—knighted in 1619—was

The Calvert Crest

created Lord Baltimore (an Irish Peerage) in 1624. Charters were granted to him by James I. to found a colony in America, which he named Maryland, the tenure of fealty being only two arrows and one fifth of all gold and silver found each year. He died in 1633, and was succeeded by his son Cecilius, who, establishing himself in an Indian village called Yoacomoco, on the bank of the Mary river, renamed it St. Mary's, and founded there the first home of religious tolerance in the world.¹

Bancroft later states of him—"Thus was the declining life of Cecilius, Lord Baltimore—the father of Maryland—the tolerant legislator—the benevolent prince—blessed with the success which philanthropy deserved. The colony, which he had planted in his youth, crowned his old age with gratitude. He died in 1675, after a supremacy of forty-three years, leaving a reputation of temperate wisdom, which the dissensions in his colony, and the various revolutions in England, could not tarnish."

It was from these "good men and true" that my husband's father was very proud of tracing his descent. He always wore upon his watch ribbon a massive seal with the arms of the family engraved thereon, and would have

¹ *Vide Bancroft's History of the United States.*

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

seorned to use a sheet of letter paper that did not bear the Calvert crest.



It was with a strange feeling of interest, therefore, that I wandered for the first time in the City of Baltimore, where its founder is still memorialized in "Calvert Station," "Calvert Street," "Calvert Avenue," etc.

During my stay, I happened to read one morning in the paper that a handsome flag had been presented to the officers and men of the —th Battalion, and that Mr. M—— of —— Street was exhibiting it in his window. I attached no particular interest to the paragraph, and it passed from my memory, but that morning, as I was rambling about, I happened to turn a corner of the principal street, and suddenly came face to face with the beautiful flag. Upon its silken folds were displayed the Stars and Stripes, and, in the centre, was the Calvert crest with its flying pennons and motto: *Fatti maschii, parole femine*.

Herewith is another version of the Calvert crest. It is a caricature of my son, Louis,

Other Version of the Calvert Crest

whose hands are—we will say, well developed. He was playing at the time at His Majesty's Theatre, and the humorous sketch was dashed off one morning during rehearsal by that most urbane of managers, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree.



CHAPTER XI

RISTORI, MARY ANDERSON, AND
MRS. LANGTRY

AFTER the termination of Mr. Booth's tour, I returned home, and played two or three short provincial engagements, one of which was *Antigone* in Sophocles' tragedy of that name. It was produced for a week at the Winter Gardens, Southport, 'with the whole of Mendelssohn's music.

In the autumn of the same year, 1883, I was engaged to accompany Madame Ristori on her provincial tour. I had previously seen the great tragedienne when she came to Manchester with her Italian company, and, although she played in a language of which I scarcely knew a dozen words, her *Marie Antoinette* so deeply affected me, that I cried like a child, and to such an extent that I brought on a horrible sick headache. Some friends of ours were with us in the theatre, including Tom Taylor, and were to return home with us to supper, but there was no supper for me. Upon reaching Avon Lodge I had to bid our guests good-night and go straight to bed.



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS ANTIGONE.

To Mrs. Lambert.

"The voice of Heaven, decides for you, my
sister?"

"Your happy brow, ere now, with

"I bless the Power divine, with triumph
crowd.

which thro' thate pair's

(Mary Stuart). ^{you}

McLairde Histori'

Manchester
8th. Dec: 1883-

Ed. Lyell

Adelaide Ristori

I had the honour of playing Lady Howard to her Queen Elizabeth, Madame Elizabeth to her Marie Antoinette, and Queen Elizabeth to her Marie Stuart; and I experienced several instances of her high-souled magnanimity. Schiller's play gives Elizabeth a fine ending of the fourth act, where the great Tudor Queen, smarting under the brand of "illegitimacy" hurled at her by Marie Stuart in the preceding act, signs the warrant for the death of her unfortunate prisoner. When it came to this, at the first rehearsal, Ristori said to me: "Now, Madame, this is *your* scene, and you do whatever you please. Arrange it just as you like."

She was an artist to the inmost core of her heart, with all the noblest instincts of one. Soaring far above all petty jealousies, the success of any of her fellow-workers gave her absolute pleasure, and many were the words of encouragement and approbation that I heard her address, even to the most unimportant members of her company.

She was accompanied by her husband, the Marquis Del Grillo, and her son and daughter, who both spoke English perfectly, but to Madame herself it was always an effort, and when excited she usually dropped into Italian, or more frequently into French.

After rehearsing the great quarrel scene

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

between Marie and Elizabeth, Ristori came to me and said,—

“ When I come to the words, ‘ Your mother, Anne Bullen,’ don’t you feel that you want to cry out with rage ? ”

I answered, “ Yes, Madame.”

“ Ah ! Then why don’t you do it ? ”

“ I was afraid you would not like me to interrupt your speech, Madame ! ”

“ Oh, nevaire mind my speech. Ask yourself, ‘ Is it right ? Is it true ? ’ and nevaire mind anybody’s speech ! ”

Upon the first night of the play’s representation, as the act-drop fell on the great scene between the two queens, Madame Ristori caught me by the hand, and led me on with her before the curtain. When the play was repeated, as I did not wish her to think that this was “ recorded as a precedent ” by me, I hid myself behind a projecting piece of scenery as soon as the act-drop fell. But as I heard her exclaim excitedly, “ Where is Madame Calvaire ? Find Madame Calvaire ! I do not go on without Madame Calvaire ! ” I had no option but to emerge from my place of concealment, and it is one of the proudest recollections of my life, that, night after night, I was led on by her, to share the plaudits accorded to Adelaide Ristori.

In the autumn of 1884 I was engaged to

The Lyceum Theatre

play the part of Lady Capulet, in a magnificent production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum Theatre, in which Miss Mary Anderson was the Juliet, the ill-fated William Terriss the Romeo, and that delightful old actress, Mrs. Stirling, the Nurse.

The play had a long and brilliant run, and as I still retained my house at Barnes, I had to spend many hours in each week in railway carriages. During these journeys, meditative fits used to come over me, and my love of scribbling returned.

Amongst other things I wrote two articles which were published in the *Sporting and Dramatic News*, and some verses which were accepted by Mr. Clement Scott for his magazine, *The Theatre*. The latter I venture to reproduce here, by the kindness of Mrs. Clement Scott, who has supplied me with the only copy I possess—

ONE OF LELY'S PORTRAITS.

An ancient hall, girt with ancestral beeches
And tall-topped oaks, where build the cawing rooks;
A sylvan park, far as the eyesight reaches,
With drowsy deer in dark sequestered nooks;
An armoury, piled up with mail and banner;
A library, with volumes rare and old;
A long low hall, where, limned in courtly manner,
Stiff lord and dames look out from tarnished gold.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

A little room, with pallid flowers brocaded,
Still called "The Chamber of the Lady May,"
With tables, bed, and chairs worm-eaten, faded,
Dark and soul-haunted with a bygone day;
The mantel, by the cunning hand of Gibbon
Carven with many a knop, and band, and whorl,
Of fruits, and flowers, and loops of waving ribbons,
Above its shelf, the picture of a girl.

The sunlight through the window's deep embrasure,
Lights, with a halo, the pure pensive face,
And, falling on the pearl-decked robe of azure,
Heightens the pencilled power of Lely's grace.
Clasped tenderly in slender jewelled fingers,
Crimson carnations show their richest bloom.
But ah! those eyes, in which a sadness lingers,
As they, e'en then, beheld impending doom.

'Tis said my lady's life was sadly fated,
A tale is told of cruelties and shames;
Those rosy lips were pressed by one she hated,
The loved one, murdered by the second James;
Then, when her prayers for mercy met denial,
And Jeffreys' devilish power could do no more,
Those dainty fingers clutched a poisonous phial,
And soon my lady's troublous life was o'er.

And now, in summer-time, in fair June weather,
When garden parties brighten up the place,
When girls, with saucy hat and tinted feather,
Coquet and tease with most bewitching grace;
When from their slender throats rise peals of laughter,
As in and out the oaken doors they pass;—
When songs from *Pinafore* ring up each rafter,
And tennis-balls whirl swiftly o'er the grass;—

The City of Washington

I often think, though maybe I am dreaming,
That from that painted canvas on the wall,
My lady's eyes, with gratefulness, are gleaming,
To think, no wrongs like hers, can them befall;
That these, her race's line, are safely dwelling,
Unswathed by Persecution's iron bands,
For "Traitor's" death-bells are no longer knelling,
And England grips no more with bloody hands.

At the close of the long run of *Romeo and Juliet*, an American tour was organized for Miss Anderson, for which I was also engaged. We visited nearly all the same cities as on the tour with Edwin Booth, an addition being Washington, which was always avoided by him, on account of the tragic memories associated with it.

What a delightful city is Washington, with its classic architecture and its magnificent Capitol! It was there that I encountered a bit of old-world courtesy which very much surprised me.

I set out one day to view the Capitol, but on reaching the foot of the long flight of white marble steps (I believe over forty in number) I paused for a moment. They led up to the principal entrance, but the idea occurred to me that that entrance might be one reserved for Senators only. A gentleman was coming down the steps, so I waited until he was within speaking distance, and then said, "I beg your pardon, but are strangers admitted through

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

that entrance ? ” He raised his hat with the most perfect courtliness, and said, “ You can go wherever you please, madam. We *have* no strangers ! ”

Of course, when I reached the beautiful city, one of my first impulses was to find Ford’s Theatre, where the assassination of Lincoln took place. I was told, and in fact all the guide-books gave the information, that it had been converted into a museum. Upon reaching it, however, I found nothing but Government offices. Asking the clerks, I was informed that the museum was on the top floor. Ascending several flights of stairs, I reached the folding-doors, which an official threw open. I passed in, and found ten or twelve persons there. I was the only woman present, and the place was filled with plaster casts of various internal parts of the human body, coloured with sickening realism, whilst glass cases contained specimens of terrible-looking instruments.

Beating a hasty retreat, I said to the official at the door, “ Why, this is a surgical museum ! ”

“ Yes, ma’am.”

“ But ladies don’t come here, do they ? ”

“ Oh yes, ma’am, but they’re chiefly lady medical students ! ”

I said that I thought the guide-books ought

California

to indicate the sort of museum that it was, for the benefit of female tourists, who, like myself, were not educated up to it!

It was upon this tour that I visited California, and gained my first experience of being five days and nights in a railway car, the monotony of which, however, was broken by a stoppage, three times a day, for meals. For these meals preparation was made beforehand, as the number of guests was wired on ahead by the guard, some hours previously, so that upon our arrival everything was placed at once upon the tables, and usually included a course of delicious mountain trout. An hour was allowed for each meal, and the traveller who chose to exercise a little rapidity with his knife and fork could easily subtract some fifteen or twenty minutes for a brisk walk up and down the platform, and then the return to the car seemed like a welcome rest.

To any one who, like myself, is an enthusiastic lover of flowers, California is, during a brief season of the year, a floral paradise. The climate round the sea-coast, as is well known, is equable, and varies very little in its temperature the whole year round. Its winter and its summer simply mean a wet and a dry season. The winter season resembles our English April, or rather what our English April is popularly supposed to be—sudden

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showers and then skies of the deepest and most glorious blue, with sunshine so deliciously warm that the city pavements steam under its rays.

Although the descent of the "Roekies" was such an old, old story, it proved none the less startling to me. It resembled the gorgeous transformation scene of bygone pantomimes, where the "Haunt of the Ice King" is, by the wave of the fairy queen's wand, changed into the "Rosy Bowers of Bliss."

At night when you seek your Pullman couch, all around is sterility and desolation: vast peaks with their everlasting snow, terrible ravines, cliffs going down into impenetrable darkness, no vegetation save a few gaunt pines and firs which stretch out their ghostly arms in the moonlight—a scene of the wildest grandeur. But, if you are a good sleeper, and wake up the next morning only just in time for breakfast—you have reached the Sacramento Valley, and then, if it is the same time of the year as that in which I first saw it—masses of blossom, exquisite tender green foliage, cows browsing under the trees, long thick luscious grasses, roses climbing up to grasp the chimney-pots, and wide tracts of ground ablaze with wild flowers, scarlet, blue, purple and yellow, meet your delighted eyes.

We passed whole fields which were one sheet

California

of brilliant yellow, the *Eschscholtzia Californica* of our English gardens. One of these fields puzzled me considerably—for in that sea of gold I could discern small black islands which moved about. What did it mean? Fading eyesight? biliary derangement? or softening of the brain? Our train was brought to a standstill, awaiting a signal, and then the mystery was solved. It was a drove of small black pigs rooting amongst the golden blossoms.

We were only one night in Sacramento City, and I happened to be out of the bill, so that I could afford to fatigue myself. After a meal I wandered off. Flowers! flowers everywhere! The gardens were gorgeous with colour. I saw bushes of hydrangeas the size of a large kitchen table, with perhaps thirty heads of bloom; and masses of geraniums, scarlet, pink, and white, which went on from year to year, and attained mammoth proportions. The lovely plumbago with its pale-grey starry blossoms clambered up to the bedroom windows. Fuchsias everywhere drooped over the porches, and here and there I saw for the first time magnificent trees with shining green leaves and large flowers of the most intense scarlet. They resembled the scarlet camellia, and yet I could see that they were not that flower—their colour was more

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vivid; so, I inquired of a passer-by. They were pomegranates.

I passed a small cottage where a woman was washing in the back yard, and over the low wooden fence was a huge bush that looked like a heap of snow with flowers that I did not recognize. I asked, "May I take a bit of this?" "Why, of course, take as much as you like," replied the woman, and went on with her washing. I passed over a bridge, and looking down saw a river which ran between banks of great white arum lilies with their golden spires. Up one road, down another I went, "and so home to dinner," as Pepys observes, with my hands full of lovely wild flowers—including a magnificent thistle, which, for the rest of the day, was worn as a badge in the Glengarry cap of Mr. Forbes Robertson.

I visited California again the following year, but it was several weeks later, the dry season had set in, and, oh the difference! No flowers—save where the gardens were carefully tended.

Exception must be made, however, for the Golden Gate Park at San Francisco, which is always "a thing of beauty," owing to its almost perfect scheme of irrigation. Hydrants are in every direction, to which are serewed great lengths of perforated pipes raised upon

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

iron trestles. The water is turned on, and No. 1 is left whilst the gardeners fix No. 2, 3, 4, or 5, as the ease may be. They then detach No. 1, and carry it to No. 6 hydrant—repeating the process *ad infinitum* all over the spacious grounds.

One day—when strolling through the conservatories—I saw two men upon step-ladders cutting away the rampant growth of some climbers, amongst which was a magnificent white heliotrope, whose perfumed blossoms fell in showers at my feet.

“ May I have some of this ? ” I asked.

“ Have it all if you like ! ”

I gathered up an immense bouquet, knotted my pocket-handkerchief round the stems, and finding it was rather late, was about to leave when an English idea occurred to me.

“ Am I likely to be stopped by any of the officials ? ”

The man looked at me in wonder. “ Eh ? ”

“ I mean the man at the gate. Will he stop me ? ”

“ I guess not ! ”

He guessed rightly. The man at the gate didn't trouble himself about such unimportant things as flowers.

Good theatrical performances in Utah are not numerous or regular. It is only when a company desire to break the journey on

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

its way to San Francisco that the city gets an opportunity of seeing a first-class entertainment.

The theatre in which we played was an old one, built by Brigham Young, and was somewhat dilapidated, the paper on the walls of my dressing-room hanging down in strips. There was a new theatre in the city, but it had never been opened. It was built by two brothers who had belonged to the Mormon Church, but afterwards became renegades. They were merchants, and upon handing over their ten per cent. to their Church, the amount was questioned. An auditor was sent to examine their books. He was refused admittance, and open war was declared. Upon the following Sunday their names were proclaimed from the pulpit, and they were solemnly "drummed out"! From a feeling of revenge, they built a new theatre, with all the up-to-date appliances for effect and comfort, but it remained closed and empty. No theatrical manager could afford to take a company to a building which two-thirds of the population were prohibited from entering.

Upon arriving at the *dépôt*, we found a rather numerous crowd awaiting us. The trains are seldom punctual, sometimes being several hours late. The curtain has been known to rise at eleven p.m., and the per-

Salt Lake City

formancee to conelude about one-thirty. The citizens therefore "eateh their hare before they cook it," and wait at the railway dépot for the arrival of the company before they pay for their seats.

We arrived a little before seven, and our performanee commeneed at eight-thirty. Upon driving to the prinicipal hotel, in the prinicipal street, I was greatly disappointed to find that it looked just like the same street, and just like the same hotel, that we had found in all the other Ameriean cities. Upon learning, however, that their rooms were all engaged, our driver then took us to the "Continental." This was an old hotel, some distanee from the business thoroughfares, a long, rambling building of only two stories, the upper rooms all having balconies. The street had an avenue of grand old trees, and down each side of it ran a narrow stream of icy clear water from the mountains, the snowy peaks of which could be seen rising over the baeks of the opposite houses. Now, this was the sort of thing I had been hoping for, and I was delighted to find my expectations realized.

"It is not often that your breakfast is handed to you by an English Mormon, is it, Mrs. Calvert?"

It was the waiter at my table at the Continental Hotel who asked me the question—

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a bright, intelligent young fellow of about twenty-six years of age.

“Are you English?”

“I came here with my father ten years ago. We came from Carlisle.”

“And have you found the change answer your expectations?”

“I would give the world to get back again,” he answered in a low tone, “but I’m afraid there’s not much chance of it. The Mormon Church claims a tenth part of a man’s income—not his profits, but his actual earnings. It will be a long time before I can save money enough to take me back.”

“And supposing you decided to leave the Mormon Church, should you have any difficulty?”

“Oh no; I should only have to write out a formal letter of resignation, and send it in. My name would be published from the pulpit, and there’s an end.”

“There would be no attempt to persecute or annoy you?”

“No, *not now*; but, of course, I should get no employment of any kind from a Mormon.”

Yes, the days of Mormon terrorism were over; the railroad, that mighty lever of equalization, having brought into Salt Lake City huge numbers of the so-called Gentiles, whose

Amongst the Mormons

power now almost equals that of the Mormons, for it is backed by the majesty of the law—the law that has at last issued the doom of polygamy.

Polygamy, being one of their religious convictions, and the Articles of Constitution of the United States declaring that no person or sect was ever to be persecuted on account of any religious conviction, made the problem a very difficult one to solve. How it was solved eventually I am not quite certain; but at the date of my second visit there the people of the Mormon Church were being imprisoned for a breach of the laws; some of their leaders had taken flight, whilst numbers of Mormon wives—to save their husbands—had come forward and voluntarily accepted social disgrace by declaring that they had never gone through any marriage ceremony at all. The Mormons, like the ancient Israelites, to whom they delighted to liken themselves, were then a persecuted people.

The Tabernacle, that intensely ugly house of worship, with its eight thousand seats, and its fine organ (built entirely by its own people), has been so often described by tourists, that I need say little about it. It is built almost entirely of wood, and has marvellous acoustic properties, a whisper being audible. Its interior—at the time I visited it—was

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dirty and dilapidated, and from the domed roof hung dozens of garlands of dried grasses and dusty paper flowers, which certainly did not add to its solemnity. It was explained that these were put up several years before for some festival, and had never been taken down. When Adelina Patti first visited Salt Lake City her concert was given here; but the experiment was never repeated, as it was regarded by many members of the Church as a desecration.

Near it was rising the New Temple, a massive and severe-looking edifice with walls of solid granite, ten feet in thickness. It is supposed to be similar in its measurements and many other respects to Solomon's Temple. An inscription on the unfinished building gave the date of its commencement, and the word "Completed" was left with a vacant space to be filled in hereafter; but Gentile prophecy then declared that no Mormon service would ever be held there, and that by the time of its completion, the Mormon religion—like the cholera, or the cattle plague—would be pretty well "stamped out."

A few years after, however, I came across a paragraph in an English newspaper stating that the Temple was finished, and had been inaugurated with great rejoicing. It need scarcely be said that no Gentile mason was

The New Mormon Temple

permitted to touch those sacred lumps of granite, and I found that whenever this Temple was spoken of by any of their people, it was "with 'bated breath, and whisp'ring humbleness," for it was a cherished conviction that within its walls messages of Divine Inspiration would be absolutely heard, and the Divine Presence absolutely seen.

It is noticeable that whereas the Mormons will only give employment to their own people, the Gentile merchants, hotel-keepers, and shop-keepers are only too glad to engage Mormon assistants in all capacities, finding them steady, sober and conscientious men. This fact alone speaks volumes in their favour.

The Assembly Hall is situated near the Tabernacle and New Temple. It seats about one thousand, and was at one time, during the winters, used for religious services, it being more easily heated than the enormous Tabernacle; but as the people grew numerically great, it proved, of course, quite inadequate, and is now only used for the business meetings of the leaders. Its ceiling is painted in neutral tints (chiefly sepia), with representations of the Mormon Temples in different parts of America, and one large picture at the end of the hall portrays "The Angel Moroni showing Joseph Smith where the Sacred Plates were hidden—Palmyra County, New York." It may be

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

necessary to explain that Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, issued its laws from engraved plates, which he claimed to have dug from the ground under angelic influence. In this picture the Angel Moroni is represented as a man clothed in long garments, resembling the Biblical illustrations of Moses and Aaron, whilst Joseph Smith is kneeling with rapt attention, clad in a froek-coat and old-fashioned trousers. The effect is incongruous, not to say comical.

Why is it that idealism and poetry seem so utterly incompatible with the "counterfeit presentment" of a froek-coat and trousers? Another portion of the ceiling depicts "Joseph Smith receiving from John the Baptist the power of baptizing unto Holiness." This the Mormons claim as the especial privilege of their own leaders, and Baptist Ministers who visit the Tabernacle are apt to have their equanimity disturbed by inferential remarks, from the old Scotch guide, that they are absolute impostors.

This old Scotch guide had been connected with the Saints of Salt Lake City for (I think he said) thirty years. He was a powerfully built man, wearing proudly a Glengarry cap, and his speech still smacked strongly of the Gaelic accent which he brought from his native "toun."

The Old Mormon Guide

I made some remark to the old guide about the progress of the New Temple since my former visit.

“ You have been here before then ?
When ? ”

“ Last year, about the middle of April.”

“ Ah ! It was the last week in April that I was sent to prison.”

“ Indeed ! And how long were you there ? ”

“ Six months.”

“ And your treatment ? I suppose there was some relaxation of the usual prison rules ? ”

“ Why yes—a little extra furniture was allowed. I took an easy-chair, a couple of soft pillows and some books. We were also allowed to receive newspapers, and some little additions to the prison fare in the way of fruit, eggs and vegetables ; but even those indulgences are stopped now, and Mormon prisoners are subject to the same rules as felons and murderers.” He added : “ There were two-and-twenty of us in the prison at the time I was there, and we were allowed to meet once a day and hold our little services and prayer meetings. So that the time was not so dreary after all.”

“ And having served your term of imprisonment, does it give you immunity for the rest of your life ? ”

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“ Oh dear no. If they can prove that I am visiting any wife but one, I am liable to be sentenced again, and next time to a much longer term.”

It seemed something of an anomaly that this man was debarred by the law from doing his duty to the women and children that he had sworn before God to shelter and protect. For, whatever may be the defects of their creed, I was assured by an impartial witness that there is no such thing as a neglected or ill-treated Mormon child. The old Scotch guide adverted to this. There had been in the papers, during the previous week, a terrible exposure of baby-farming in New York, with some horrible and ghastly details.

“ Ah,” said the old Scotchman, “ we are proud of *our* children. We bring them up to love and honour their fathers and mothers. *We* have no babies that we cram into dustbins, or bury under cellar floors.”

I said to my English waiter the next morning, “ Well—now that polygamy is nearly crushed, I suppose Mormonism will gradually die out ? ” But he answered very seriously, “ No, I don’t think so; the tenets are very beautiful when you hear them expounded, and you know, we live upon the old Biblical lines.”

Before leaving I visited the Mormon Stores, where it is said the “ turnover ” reaches a



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS MADAME DESCHAPPELLES IN MISS MARY ANDERSON'S TOUR.

I Meet a Manchester Mormon

million dollars a year. As I passed through the boot and shoe department it occurred to me that my own footgear was getting very much the worse for wear, through rambles over miles of rugged ground. The specimens shown, however, were not remarkable for elegance, so I asked a salesman, "Haven't you anything better than these—more like the ones I am wearing?" holding out my foot.

"Ah," said the man, "where were those made?"

"In London."

"You've come from London?"

"Yes, but—" I added, for I had detected a Lancastrian ring in his voice—"before that I lived in Manchester for twelve years!"

"You have lived in Manchester? Then you know Oldham Street?"

I nodded.

"Well, before I came here, I was in a boot-maker's shop in Oldham Street for five years!"

It's an old saying that the world's a small one after all!

Miss Anderson's tour closed in May, and I returned to England immediately after. I had been in London only a few weeks when I received an offer to join Mrs. Langtry for her American tour, and on September 15 started

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once more for the land of the West, my youngest daughter accompanying me—she being engaged for several small parts.

The Lady of Lyons was included in Mrs. Langtry's répertoire, as it had been in that of Miss Anderson, and again I was the Madame Deschappelles—mother of the two most beautiful Paulines that ever graced the stage.

We played for several weeks in New York, and then went to Boston, where my daughter and I were warmly welcomed by our numerous young relatives, though I found that my sister Clara was away on tour.

On November 19, whilst we were in Boston, the three principal companies then playing in that city—Wilson Barrett's, Henry Dixey's, and Mrs. Langtry's—received an invitation from the Mayor. He placed his beautiful yacht at our services for a sail up the harbour, and a visit to one of the municipal institutions, the reformatory on Deer Island.

This reformatory was chiefly for criminal boys, though a part of it was used for adult prisoners, whose sentences were light ones. We went on board shortly after noon, the day was deliciously warm and sunny, and the harbour, with its autumn-tinted islands and its variety of craft, was most picturesque. Upon landing, we were shown into the receiving office, and asked to remain there whilst the

An American Reformatory

governor was informed of our arrival. As we waited, two more additions to the criminal inmates were brought in: two little lads of ten or eleven years of age, and it was sad to see the furtive, hunted look in their faces, as with keen, half-closed eyes, they glanced around and took stock of everything—the bare walls, the official in his desk, and the brightly dressed company. At last we were conducted across the courtyard, and into the main building, where, in a large hall, over two hundred and fifty of the little culprits were assembled. Quite a musical programme had been arranged, and they sang, with their “childish trebles,” some simple melodies which my own little lads in England were fond of, and which, I need scarcely say, brought tears into my eyes, and a choking sensation into my throat.

Then the master appealed to the company present, asking them if they would kindly contribute to the pleasure of the afternoon, upon which George Barrett (whose touching performance of Jaikes in *The Silver King* may still be remembered by old playgoers) sang a couple of comic songs. Two or three recitations followed by some of the other actors, and Henry Dixey's little daughter, aged seven, caused great amusement by singing one of her father's ditties from *Adonis*, and imitating his actions. The master then addressed his pupils

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in a kindly voice, as follows: "Now, boys, I'm sure you must all feel very much obliged to these ladies and gentlemen who have so kindly entertained you. Now, remember, there is nothing to prevent you growing up into good and honourable citizens, and by and by you may possibly come across these ladies and gentlemen again, and be able to offer them your hospitality in return for the pleasure they have given you to-day, and I am sure you will feel proud to do so." How I admired the tact of that appeal to their dignity and self-respect! He then added, "Now, lads, three cheers for our visitors." This was responded to heartily. We quitted the hall, and were shown into a large apartment where a most bountiful *thé à la fourchette* was laid out for us, with the Governor at the head of the table. After this we returned to the yacht, again had a delightful sail, and landed in Boston in time to reach our respective theatres.

We played for one night at Virginia City, the "City of the Silver Mines," from which MaeKay, the Silver King, obtained his immense fortune. The mines now belonged to the Government, and although the output was small, compared with that of other times, it was still large enough to yield a profit, and to justify their being worked.

At Carson City we changed into a small

Virginia City

train (there were only two a day), and began to almost climb the hills. I have never before experienced such steep gradients, or such sharp curves. As we ascended, we could see beneath us an immense valley planted with fruit trees and vegetables, the produce of which was carried up twice a day to the miners by that same train, whilst upon the opposite side of the vast amphitheatre stood the city we were bound for. It looked in the distance like a child's box of toys. On we went, the train wriggling like a snake round the stone peaks—so much so that sometimes, from where I sat, I could see the engine, and sometimes the last carriage. By degrees, all vegetation ceased, and when we got a glimpse of the valley beneath us, it looked quite small, and we could no longer distinguish cabbages from potatoes. There was only one vast sheet of green.

At last we reached the station, where we found waiting a group of miners, who welcomed us with a cheer. There was only one hotel, the "International," to which, of course, we had to walk, for there were no public vehicles to be had, and we were surprised to find what an important-looking building it was, though bearing marks of decay, as indeed did every other building in the town. Virginia City had, in its day, been an important place, where money flowed freely, and prices were no

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

object; but with the gradual exhaustion of the mines, the population had decreased, and business, generally, had gone backwards.

It was not an everyday occurrence for a touring company to arrive up there, and we were quite lionized. The manager of the hotel placed his best rooms at our service at a moderate price, mine being a corner room with three large windows on one side, and two on the other, commanding a magnificent panorama of the distant snow-topped mountain peaks. The table, too, was bountifully supplied, fresh vegetables, fruits, and salads, brought up from the valley below, appearing at each meal.

The miners had formed, from their own ranks, quite an excellent band, which played in the square where the theatre was situated for half an hour before the doors were opened, and then occupied the orchestra. The house was packed to its fullest capacity, and I was informed that the receipts were over \$1,000.

On the following morning the early train took us down again, but we quitted the interesting place with much regret, our short stay not permitting us to see the mines, or, to any extent, the town.

Mrs. Langtry's tour was a long one, and we did not finish till the end of July—when I returned home.

Second Tour with Mary Anderson

In the following year I was again engaged by Mr. Abbey for a second American tour with Miss Mary Anderson—which unfortunately came to a premature end, owing to the following unhappy and unforeseen circumstances.

When we reached New York we were amazed and shocked to find that the larger part of the New York Press were publishing articles of the most virulent and abusive nature against Miss Anderson and her company. This lady, with her grace, her beauty, her undoubted gifts, and her blameless life—a woman whom any nation might be proud to claim as a daughter—was assailed by her own countrymen with columns of invective and scurrility.

Two charges were laid against her. One was, that she had brought over with her an English company. “We should have thought there was upon the American Stage sufficient talent to have supported Miss Mary Anderson; but no, her own countrymen are thrust aside, they are not good enough for her, and she brings over a lot of——” etc. etc. The second charge was that of raising the prices. “We have always seen Mary Anderson for a dollar, and why are we now asked to pay double? Is it because she has been rubbing her elbows against some of the British aristocracy? We

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trust that the good sense of the New York public will resist this extortion," etc. etc.

To the first charge, the answer could have been made that she had brought over the people who had been with her through a long London season, and to whom she had grown accustomed. She was under contract to open in New York on a certain date. To have formed a fresh company upon her arrival, and to have rehearsed the whole of her large repertoire with them, in the time allowed, would have been scarcely possible, and, even if possible, would have entailed such extra labour and anxiety that it was scarcely to be thought of. To the second charge, Miss Anderson was not responsible for raising the prices. She was in the hands of her *entrepreneur*, Mr. E. A. Abbey. He had brought over a large and important company, including a glee party, dancers, etc., with the beautiful scenery, dresses, and properties used at the Lyceum Theatre, London. He naturally chose what he thought was the surest means of securing a return for his outlay.

It was generally felt that a few conciliatory suppers, and a little distribution of largesse, would have quieted the adverse faction, but neither Mr. Abbey nor Miss Anderson would stoop to such a humiliating alternative. And so this storm of abuse continued through the

Mary Anderson's Last Tour

whole of her engagement, and of course militated greatly against its success, both artistically and financially.

One night when the curtain fell to a very faint round of applause from a chilly audience, the Rosalind said to her Orlando, "Oh, if I live to return to your dear country I will never leave it," a resolve which was afterwards carried out.

Upon leaving New York there was a feeling of relief, and a hope of better treatment. This hope (in the larger cities) was to a great extent realized. But when we struck some of the smaller places we found the local press following the New York lead, and every term of derision and contempt was hurled at our unoffending heads.

En route to San Francisco we stayed again at Sacramento for a night. It was Miss Anderson's birthplace, and before we arrived, it had been proposed by the Mayor that he and the principal officials of the city should receive their gifted countrywoman at the station, present her with an address of welcome, and invite her to a State luncheon. All this was successfully carried out, in spite of the denunciations of the local press, of which this is a specimen: "Who is Miss Mary Anderson? What has she ever done for Sacramento? She happens to have been born in Sacramento,

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but is that any reason why our principal citizens should grovel in the dust before her?" Her hotel in one town was found to be insanitary, and removal was imperative. The comment in the local journal was: "Miss Anderson has left the Hotel B——! Mr. Abud, her business manager, was scouring the city yesterday, in search of cheaper accommodation!"

Miss Anderson was also charged with putting on a cold and dignified manner (supposed to be copied from the British aristocracy). Her "coldness" was thus commented on: "Miss Anderson has taken up her quarters at the Hotel V——. The proprietor, therefore, has stopped the supply of ice, and has provided all the waiters with overcoats and woollen gloves"!

After that we reached a city where a press representative dogged her footsteps for a whole morning, and managed to work out nearly a column of copy, with such details as these: "She crossed the street and entered Booker's Stores, where she bought some Eau de Cologne. Then, she turned to the right, and went into Curtis's, where she obtained some writing paper and a couple of magazines, and then," etc. etc. This dignified effusion concluded with: "She ended her morning's peregrinations at the Church of St. Joseph, which she entered, doubtless, for the purpose of con-

Gems of Journalism

fession.” This was followed by a coarsely drawn wood-cut, representing a priest of the “Friar Tuck” type, and Miss Anderson, with clasped hands and upturned eyes, kneeling at his feet.

That night, as we were waiting to go on the stage together, she said to me, in a piteous tone: “It’s very hard when they can’t leave even one’s religion alone.”

Afterwards we were due at Washington, with Baltimore to follow. It was some special week at Washington—I think the inauguration of the President. The hotels were crowded and good accommodation was very difficult to obtain. The programme for the week was, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, *A Winter’s Tale*, and on the Thursday *The Lady of Lyons*. As I was not required till the Thursday I proposed to Mr. Abud to get out at Baltimore and remain there till I was wanted, as it was only about an hour’s journey from there to Washington. He agreed to this, and I took up my quarters at my old hotel (Barnum’s) in Baltimore. On the Thursday, when I was about to start for Washington, I was shocked to read in the morning papers that Miss Anderson had on the previous evening fainted twice upon the stage, and this sad news was followed by a wire, telling me not to come, as the theatre would have to be closed.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Mr. Abbey brought the company over to Baltimore, and we all hoped that, after a few nights' rest, Miss Anderson might have sufficiently recovered to appear again, but it was not to be. As events afterwards proved, that night at Washington was Mary Anderson's last appearance on the stage. We were taken to New York, where the whole of the company were summoned to the theatre, and there Mr. Abbey met us, and addressed us.

He said that it was the first time in his life that he had ever been compelled to appeal to his company for their forbearance and sympathy. He had always been able to carry out to the strict letter every contract that he had made, but, in this case, it was utterly impossible—the thing was of such magnitude. All that he could suggest was that he would pay the salaries of the present week, and of *one* other, and that he would at once book our passages by the first liner available. He then left us to consider the proposal. Upon discussing it amongst ourselves, we felt that, to those who had large salaries, the offer was no great hardship, but that it would tell severely upon the poorer members of the company. Upon his return, therefore, it was laid before him, that we accepted his offer, but that we earnestly entreated that *three* weeks, instead of two, might be paid to those whose salaries

I Return to England

were under forty dollars. To this he generously agreed.

I remained in New York for another fortnight on a visit to my sisters, and then sailed for England.

Miss Anderson's recovery was slow. Her highly wrought temperament had writhed under the bitter vulgarities that had been flung at her, and this, with her hard work, and her strict observance of religious duties (for I was told that whenever it was possible she rose at seven to attend early Mass), resulted in a long illness of physical and mental prostration.

As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, she sailed for England, which ever since has been her home. M. Navarro, who had long been deeply attached to her, followed. She became his wife, and they retired to their beautiful old English home in a quiet little village in Worcestershire. The stage thus lost one of its brightest ornaments.

CHAPTER XII

ON AND OFF THE STAGE

IN the following year I accompanied Mrs. Langtry on an English provincial tour, and when she afterwards became the manageress of the St. James's Theatre I was engaged by her for a part in *Esther Sandraz*. This was followed by an offer from an American lady who was to appear as Juliet at the Old Globe Theatre in the Strand (now demolished). I played the Nurse, and the tragedy ran for six weeks.

Then came a time when it seemed as if my theatrical career had come to an end. I was out of employment for many months—my youngest daughter, who never had any great love of the stage, was about to become the wife of a Cheshire farmer—and parting with her I should have been left alone, all my other children being married, with the exception of my youngest son, who had been for some years in Australia. They were scattered about in various parts of the kingdom, and I could only hope to see them at intervals.

Country Life

I therefore managed to secure a piece of land, in Cheshire, adjoining the farm of my prospective son-in-law, and on it I built a pretty cottage, the plans for which were generously given me by our kind friend, Alfred Darbyshire—who had then just completed the Manchester Palace of Varieties.

I planted my half-acre of ground with fruit trees of every kind, and dozens of standard and climbing roses. The care of my garden was a great delight to me, as well as being a healthy occupation, and I quite imagined that I should finish my days in that peaceful country home.

I emerged from my retirement, however, to play Dame Quickly in Shakespeare's *Henry the Fourth* at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester, where my son Louis was producing the Play—he himself appearing as Falstaff.

He had always been ambitious to follow in his father's footsteps, but up to that time had tried in vain to get Shakespeare produced in Manchester. The doors of the Theatre Royal and the "Prince's" were shut against him, but Mr. Flanagan of the "Queen's" listened to his proposal, and warmly co-operated. The "Queen's" had been for some years devoted to melodrama, and was little patronized by the better classes, but on the opening night the

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

theatre was packed by an audience in which the Mayor and Mayoress and the principal merchants represented the wealth of the city, and the professors of Owen's College its learning and culture.

The event was a great success, and it has borne good fruit, for a Shakespearean play has been produced in Manchester every year since then, and is now one of the institutions of the city.

Whilst in my little country home, I received a wire from my good friend, Mr. C. T. Helmsley, who has now been for some years business manager at the St. James's Theatre: "Would you care to accept a part in a play by Bernard Shaw? If so, wire terms!"

Now, I am almost ashamed to confess that I had never heard of Bernard Shaw. He was at that time (as I learned afterwards) dramatic critic for the *Saturday Review*, but was unknown as a playwright. The Avenue Theatre (now The Playhouse) had been taken for a summer season by Miss Florence Farr, and Mr. Helmsley was the business manager. They had opened, a few nights previously, with a comedy, which was an absolute failure, and the next venture was to be this play of Bernard Shaw's.

Now, Mr. Shaw, I believe, had never heard of *me*, and had in his mind two ladies in London,

‘ Arms and the Man ’

each one of whom he thought would fit the part. Upon communicating with them, however, he found they were both engaged, and as a *dernier ressort*, he accepted Mr. Helmsley’s warm recommendation of me, hence the telegraphic message. How seldom can we foresee consequences ! I hesitated before I replied. I had a vision of a long journey, two or three weeks’ rehearsals, a possible run of a few nights, and a long journey home again. However, I finally decided to accept, and that was, practically, the commencement of nearly fifteen years’ work in London.

The play—*Arms and the Man*—was produced hurriedly, we were none of us too conversant with our parts, and, at times, the public failed to grasp the intensely clever things that were thrown at them; but the verdict was decidedly favourable, and when Mr. Shaw appeared before the curtain at the close, he received an enthusiastic reception, marred only by one loud “ booh ! ” from a man in the gallery. Mr. Shaw’s clever impromptu is well known. “ I quite agree with that gentleman up there, but what is the use of his opinion, and mine, if the rest of the audience think differently ? ”

The newspapers were not unanimous in their praise, and one or two derided the incident of a soldier carrying chocolate in his

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

knapsack as a means of sustenance. The idea, at the time, was a novelty, but it was only a few years later that Queen Victoria distributed boxes of chocolate to her soldiers. I may add that *Arms and the Man* has been utilized for a comic opera, and, at the time I write, is celebrating its two-hundredth representation as *The Chocolate Soldier*.

I append a programme, and call attention to the fact that "Mr. Bernard Gould" was none other than Bernard Partridge, *Punch's* fine cartoonist, whilst Mr. A. E. W. Mason has achieved distinction both as a novelist and playwright. The extraordinary drawing with which the programme is illustrated was also used for posters, and came from the pencil of Aubrey Beardsley, sometimes called "Aubrey Weird-sley." He was then the *dernier cri* in fantastic art, and very popular, but with his death the peculiar school, of which he was the leader, slowly died out. Apropos of this startling lady, *Punch* suggested that, instead of calling the play *Arms and the Man*, it should be *Shoulders and the Woman!*"

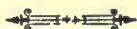
I have never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Shaw since, nor of appearing in any of his other plays; but years later—whilst engaged at the Haymarket, I received the following—



AVENUE THEATRE

Northumberland Avenue,

CRANG CROSS, W.C.



Manager :

MR. C. T. H. HELMSLEY.



NO FEES OF ANY KIND.

Any Attendant accepting a Gratuity
will be instantly dismissed.



Designed by AUBREY BEARDSLEY

PROGRAMME OF "ARMS AND THE MAN."

Produced on Saturday, April 21st, 1894.

EVERY EVENING,

AT TEN MINUTES TO NINE,

A Romantic Comedy, in Three Acts,

ENTITLED

ARMS AND THE MAN

BY BERNARD SHAW.

Major Paul Petkoff	} Bulgarian Officers	Mr. JAMES WELCH
Major Sergius Saranoff		Mr. BERNARD GOULD
Captain Bluntschli (a Swiss Officer in the Servian Army)		Mr. YORKE STEPHENS
Major Plechanoff (a Russian Officer in the Bulgarian Service)		Mr. A. E. W. MASON
Nicola		Mr. ORLANDO BARNETT
Catherine Petkoff		Mrs. CHARLES CALVERT
Ratna Petkoff		Miss ALMA MURRAY
Louka		Miss FLORENCE FARR

The Action occurs at Major Petkoff's House, in a small Bulgarian Town, near the Dragoman Pass.

The First Act takes place in November, 1885, immediately after the Battle of Slivnitsa; The Second and Third Acts in the Forenoon and Afternoon of the 6th of March 1886, Three Days after the Signature of the Treaty.

ACT I. - RAÏNA'S CHAMBER.

ACT II. - THE GARDEN.

ACT III. - THE LIBRARY.

The Management are much indebted to Mr. J. SCHÖNBERG, Special War Artist to "The Illustrated London News," for valuable assistance generously rendered.

George Bernard Shaw

The Old House,
Harmer Green, Welwyn.
March 5, 1905.

MY DEAR MRS. CALVERT,

The Stage Society wants to perform my *Man and Superman* on Sunday evening the 9th of April, and on the afternoons of the 10th and 11th.

Now the Stage Society can be nothing to you but a nuisance. It gives scratch performances which the actors have to pull through, and pays 3 guineas for your cabs, etc. Very nice for ambitious beginners who want press notices and opportunities for acting; but no use to you at all.

But if you have time to read the enclosed script, will you look at Mrs. Whitfield's scene in the last act, p. 91 to p. 96, and tell me how I am to get it played. I shall have to dress Louis as an old lady and make *him* do it, unless—unless?

I know it is not reasonable to ask you to play Mrs. Whitfield; but it is still less reasonable to expect me to do without you for want of asking. I dare say I can get somebody—if I must—who would be fairly good in it; but you would be WONDERFUL.

Yours sincerely,

G. BERNARD SHAW.

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Here is also another characteristic letter, addressed to my son Louis, who had been rehearsing in a somewhat lethargic manner at the Court Theatre—

10, Adelphi Terrace, W.C.
November 18, 1905.

MY DEAR CALVERT,

I hope I did not worry you too much to-day at rehearsal. The fact is, you are ruining the end of the second act by your enormous, desolating, obvious-to-everybody absent-mindedness. The reason I put on an understudy for Barbara was that you had driven Miss Russell almost out of her senses by letting the scene drop when she was doing her hardest to get hold of it. She did not complain; but I saw what was happening, and acted on my own initiative. You see it is all very well for you; you know that you can wake up at the last moment and do the trick; but that will not help out the unhappy victims who have to rehearse with you, and you forget your own weight. The moment you let the play go it drops. You sit there, greatly interested (except when you are asleep) by the way to manage the play, and the mistakes that all the rest are making, and trying to make out what is wrong with the whole scene. Of course what is wrong is *you*. There is that

Another Letter of Bernard Shaw

frightful speech where Undershaft deliberately gives a horrible account of his business, sticking detail after detail of the horrors of war into poor bleeding Barbara to show her what Mrs. Baines will stand for £5,000. Cusins, who sees it all, is driven into an ecstasy of irony by it; it is a sort of fantasia, played on the nerves of both him and Barbara by Machiavelli-Mephistopheles; all that is needed to produce the effect is steady concentration, magnetic intensity. But you are evidently thinking what a monstrous thing it is that an Idiot of an author should produce a play when he doesn't know the first rudiments of his business, or—and then you suddenly realize that the stage has been waiting for you for ten minutes. There are moments when, if we were not in a conspiracy to spoil you, we should rend you to pieces and wallow in your blood. Miss Russell has been working at the thing with the greatest enthusiasm, and when she tries to get into the rush of it, and is slacked down every time by your colossal indifference, she almost gives up in despair. If you were an insignificant actor it would not matter; they could run away from you; but they are not strong enough for this; the piece takes its time and intensity from you in spite of all they can do. Mind, I quite appreciate your heroic study of the lines; and I don't complain of anything

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

except the end of the second act; but for that I have no words strong enough to describe your atrocity. We have only one week more; and I have set my heart on your making a big success in the part, and you are taking it as easy as if Undershaft were an old uncle in a farce. Spend to-morrow in prayer. My wife was horrified at my blanched hair and lined face when I returned from rehearsal to-day, and I have a blinding headache, and can no more.

Your unfortunate,

G. B. S.

I had finished with *Arms and the Man*, and returned to my roses and cabbages, when one day a telegram came—"Do you care to play a small part in a new play by Carton? If so, wire terms. Charles Hawtrey."

Terms were arranged, and I started for London. I reached the Comedy Theatre on the morning fixed for the reading of the play—*A White Elephant*. I found that the character assigned to me was that of a caretaker, who did not appear till the last act, a depressing, unhappy, pessimistic woman. As they rehearsed the acts in their order, it was about a fortnight before I received a summons for my first rehearsal.

I had rehearsed, I suppose, three or four mornings, when, at the close of my scene,

First Appearance at the Comedy

Mr. Hawtrey took me aside, and told me, in as polite and kindly a tone as possible, that I was not at all what the author intended. The idea was that of a very common woman, who sniffed, and talked through her nose. I answered that I would try to sniff and talk through my nose, but that I was afraid I should not be able to do it. I went to my lodgings and practised these accomplishments, but I felt myself to be a huge failure. My judgment, too, rebelled against making the woman so very common. She had to mention that for several years she had been cook in a nobleman's family, and the character they wished me to portray would not have been tolerated in any nobleman's household for ten minutes—in fact, she would never have got there at all. I tried the alteration on the next morning, but felt it was not a success. At the following rehearsals, however, I stopped the sniffing by degrees, and became again my own natural self. I suppose I was looked upon as hopeless, but no particular comment was made, and I was allowed to continue rehearsing. I should not have been surprised, however, if any morning I had received a polite note informing me that my services would not be required (for I had no contract), nor would such an occurrence have troubled me particularly. I had my pretty cottage in

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

Cheshire. I could go back to it "and thank Heaven that I was rid of a failure."

Then came the dress rehearsal. I was in my caretaker's dress. I had on what is technically termed "the war-paint," and I had made up my mind to play the part exactly as I felt it. Upon leaving the stage after my first scene, I encountered Mr. Carton, who had rushed round from the stalls, and who said, excitedly—"Play the part exactly as you're rehearsing it! You don't know the hit you're going to make!"

Well—stage-craft has its troubles and vexations, but it also has its recompenses.

The *White Elephant* was produced, the critics were all very kind to me, and in the *Daily Telegraph* of the following morning, Clement Scott bracketed Miss Compton's name and mine as the two greatest factors in the success of the play. In a small way I woke to find myself famous.

I asked Mr. Hawtrey one day how it was he came to think of *me*, and he replied, "Oh, I saw you one night at the 'Avenue' in *Arms and the Man*."

And I was within an ace of refusing *that* engagement!

After the *White Elephant*, *Saucy Sally*, a farcical comedy by Burnand, was produced, in which I had a tremendously funny part.



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT IN "BEAUTY AND THE BARGE" AT THE
HAYMARKET THEATRE.

The Haymarket Theatre

Then came *One Summer's Day*, by H. V. Esmond, and, although there was very little for me to do, Mr. Hawtrey asked me to accept it, as he wished to retain me for the production following, which was *Lord and Lady Algy*, in which Mr. Carton had written for me a clever little character sketch. I thus played four original parts consecutively, and remained at the Comedy Theatre for nearly two years.

I afterwards joined Messrs. Harrison and Maude at the "Haymarket," where I played seven engagements—the last but one being in that successful comedy, *Beauty and the Barge*, which had a run of 222 performances.

Long before this my Cheshire home had become something of a small "white elephant," I had to pay ground rent and taxes, but could reap no pleasure from it. For over two years I had only been there for six weeks. The roses were climbing up the chimney-pots, and the garden bore bushels of fruit, but they were not for me, and so when a liberal offer came for its purchase I sold it. The new tenant told me some time after that from one apple-tree, which I had planted, a "Dish of Dessert Apples" had been plucked which had carried off the first prize at the local flower show.

During the last weeks of *Beauty and the Barge* an American agent called upon me with an offer from Messrs. Liebler & Co., of New York,

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

to go over and play Mrs. Hardeastle for six weeks. I accepted, for I was longing to see my relatives again, and as soon as the "Haymarket" closed—started for America for the seventh time.

My two step-sisters were at too great a distance for me to reach them, but I saw again my sister Clara. After many years of widowhood she had married again, and was now Mrs. W. Redmund. She and her husband had just returned from a long tour with Ada Rehan, and were looking forward to a delightful summer in a sweet little cottage which they had built for themselves on the banks of the Hudson. At the foot of their garden was their own little bathing-box, and upon the water close by their own boat; it was an idyllic home. I spent Easter Sunday with them, and stayed the night, only returning in time for rehearsal on the Monday, and it was our last parting. A few months after my return home the terrible news reached me that, owing to some contamination of the water, typhoid fever had broken out there, and my sister had fallen a victim. And so passed away one of the sweetest and best of women.

* * * * *

Little more need be said concerning my stage career, but to bring it up to date I may add



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS MRS. HARDCASTLE, IN NEW YORK.

His Majesty's Theatre

that in September of last year (1910) I had the privilege of being associated with Sir Herbert Tree's magnificent production of *Henry the Eighth*, which has attained to 279 representations, a run, I believe, never before achieved in England for a Shakespearean play. I also had the pleasure of being an invited guest at the sumptuous Banquet, given by Sir Herbert on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre on the evening of Sunday, January 29, to celebrate the 200th performance of the play. And I was delighted to be one of the great band of nearly 500 performers who assembled in His Majesty's Theatre on June 29 in this present year, to testify their loyalty and devotion to our King and Queen, this being the first Coronation gala performance for which the stage had ever received the Royal Command.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STAGE—PAST AND PRESENT

IN looking back through the shadows of fifty years, it comes upon me vividly that the old intolerant spirit of Puritanism which abhorred the stage has been slowly dying a lingering death. It has not yet quite departed. It still keeps a foothold in our Cathedral towns and in Nonconformist Chapels; but it is fast wending towards its finality—

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new.”

Lady St. Helier, in her delightful book of *Reminiscences*, says: “In analysing the cosmopolitan character which English society assumed in consequence of the new elements that had penetrated it, nothing is more remarkable than the universal welcome offered to the representatives of the drama. Up to thirty-five years ago, the stage was a part of the community which lived in its own little world, entirely absorbed with its own professional interests, and having no communication with any society outside its own boundaries. Its numbers were limited, for there were



MRS. CHARLES CALVERT AS MRS. HARDCASTLE.

(From a Crayon Sketch by Lilian Harris.

The Spirit of Intolerance

many fewer theatres than now, and its leading members were extremely busy and earnest people who had neither time nor inclination for general society. It was not until ten or twelve years afterwards that actors broke through what seemed to be their unalterable custom, of limiting themselves entirely to their own particular *milieu*."

This is very kind and gracious of Lady St. Helier, but it was not a distaste for society which kept the actors of bygone days at home. It was because they were seldom asked to go anywhere else. Like the heretics of old, the ban of the Church was upon them.

A story is told of Mrs. Pritchard, the celebrated actress. She was seeking shelter under an archway to avoid a sudden storm. A clerical gentleman was sheltering there too, when a ragged, wretched-looking woman came towards them and solicited charity. The gentleman had, probably, no small change; at all events he offered nothing, but Mrs. Pritchard gave the woman a shilling. After the beggar had gone, he said, "That was very good of you, madam. May I ask your name?" "I am Mrs. Pritchard, the actress," was the reply. The reverend gentleman drew himself up, and saying, icily, "I am extremely sorry to hear it," walked away.

As a profane player I too have had some

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

curious experiences, especially amongst the “unco guid” of bonnie Scotland, where bigotry has always been rampant. Here is one: towards the end of a long engagement at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, the theatre was one night burned to the ground. Fortunately, Mrs. Glover, the proprietress, owned a smaller theatre in the city, which happened to be unlet, and so we were transferred there, thus sparing us the loss of our salaries. I happened to be in a baker’s shop the next morning when a dirty, unkempt woman came in for a loaf of bread, and she said to the attendant, who handed it to her, “Ha! The theatre was burned doon last nicht. Eh, but I’m glad on’t. God *must* put a stop to the devil’s work somehow.”

And here is another specimen: my husband and I were one day chatting with Phelps, when the subject of intolerance came up, and he told us the following story: “I went home from ‘Sadler’s Wells’ one day after a long rehearsal when, to my surprise, I saw my little daughter, who was supposed to be at school, playing in the garden. I thought, ‘Good heavens, what has happened? Is there an epidemic in the school, or has she been expelled for rebellious conduct?’ when my wife came up to me, with a letter in her hand. It was from the Lady Principal. She was deeply sorry, but she had received a letter from a gentleman whose

An Invasion of Amateurs

three daughters were among her pupils. He was perfectly shocked to learn that his children were associating with the daughter of an actor, and if Miss Phelps remained at the school he should be compelled to take them away." The Lady Principal evidently thought that it was better to lose one pupil than three, and started little Miss Phelps home.

Alfred Wigan (who was for some time manager of the St. James's Theatre), an admirable actor and a cultured gentleman, had a similar experience—his little boy being expelled from a school in Brighton on account of his father's avocation.

As this spirit of intolerance died away, and exclusive people were no longer afraid of being seen in a theatre, it followed that after a time managers could count upon larger audiences, and were no longer compelled to change their programmes nightly. Plays could be run for a whole week, thus reducing the labour of study and rehearsals. About forty-five years ago, the Touring Companies began (I think Boucicault's *Colleen Bawn* initiated them); and then actors found that one part lasted for many weeks, no study, no rehearsals, their lives comparatively easy. The stage then became very attractive to young ladies and gentlemen, not only those who were anxious to do something for a living, but to many who

Sixty-Eight Years on the Stage

simply desired to while away the time, so dramatic schools came into existence, of which they became dramatic pupils. And they came in shoals—with their refinement, their education and, very often, their indifference to remuneration.

The bonds of caste were thereby loosened. The leading tragedian could no longer ignore the “utility” man who was playing his lackey, as the gentleman who played the lackey might be an Oxford or a Cambridge man, and a member of the same club. The dramatic ranks became over-crowded. Men and women who had worked for years found themselves pushed to the wall, and at the present day many of our ablest artists have frequently to face months and months of enforced idleness, during which the sum put by for a rainy day vanishes into nothingness. The stage has now become one of the most precarious professions in existence, and it is still over-crowded, despite the enormous increase in the number of theatres. And yet, in spite of this strong amateur element, I feel justified in saying that the stage has never possessed more talent, or shown more artistic work, than it does now. We may not, perhaps, have a Michael Angelo in our art, but we have scores of Meissoniers, David Wilkies and Hogarths.

Our stage is healthier, too, than in the old

The Stage of the Present Day

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Adieu

CHAPTER THE LAST

And so I take my leave.—Merchant of Venice.

AND now I have reached the limits of my allotted space, and the task which I set myself nearly seven months ago has come to an end: a task which has sometimes been painful, but far more frequently pleasurable, for after all my life has had much sunshine and many blessings. I trust my book with all its faults to that generous Public which throughout my long life has ever been so good to me.

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Let your indulgence set me free.”—*The Tempest.*

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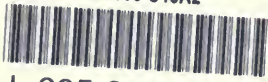
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